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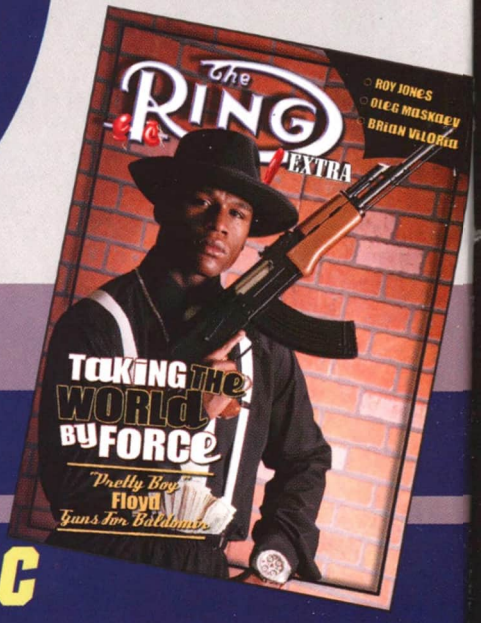

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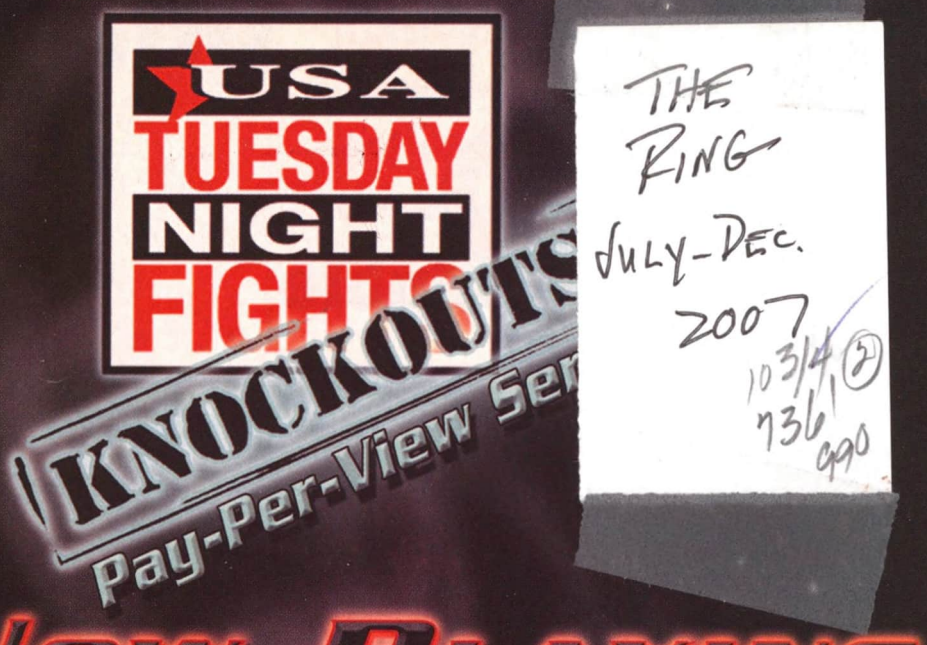

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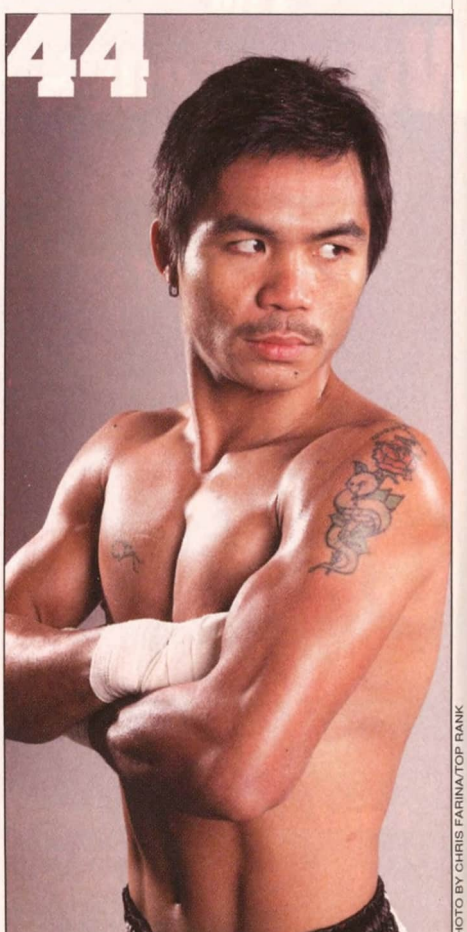

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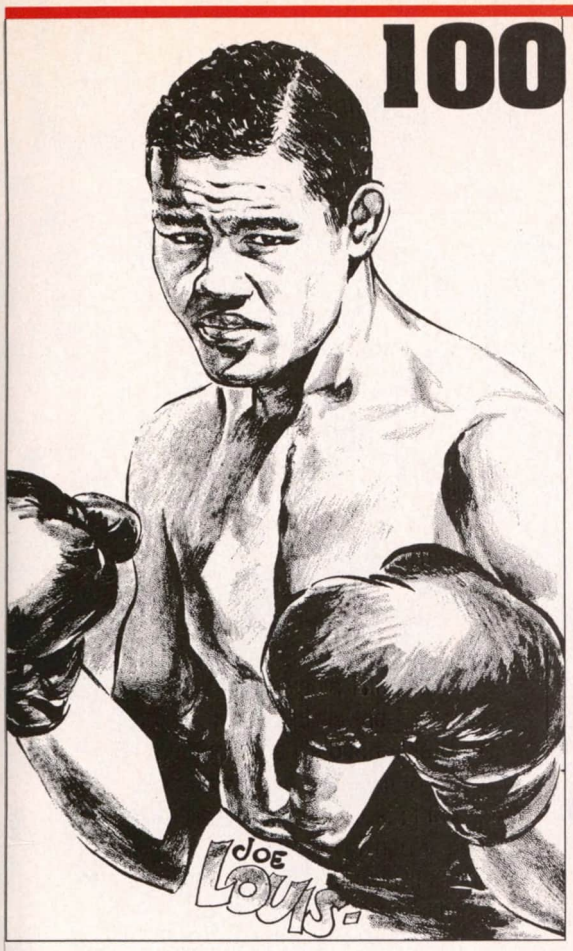

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PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

[Opening Shot]

Not On St. Patrick's Day!

The "Erin Go Brawl" fight card at The Theater at Madison Square Garden actually took place on the eve of St. Patty's Day, but with a packed house in support of the card's Irish contingent, an undefeated guy with a name like James Clancy was not supposed to get knocked out in the second round by a no-name 38-year-old with a 3-4-1 record. Rodney Ray got to celebrate the victory here, but we don't think that stopped Clancy from celebrating the night after.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

[Ringside]

The RING

It would be overstating the case to say I have a love-hate relationship with boxing, but my love for the Sweet Science is certainly tempered by its maddening inability to get things right on a consistent basis. Recent history has only reinforced this contrary state of mind, so I have decided to use a sizable chunk of this column to hand out a few "cheers" and "jeers." It won't change anything, of course, but it will make me feel a bit better.

♦ Cheers to junior featherweight Rafael Marquez and cruiser Jean-Marc Mormeck for battling through considerable adversity to win THE RING's recognition as true world champions.

♦ Jeers to the WBC for persisting with its ludicrous "open scoring" experiment, which drained much of the suspense out of the rousing Mormeck-O'Neil Bell slugfest.

♦ Cheers to Golden Boy Promotions for the Juan Manuel Marquez-Marco Antonio Barrera pay-per-view. All three televised bouts were evenly matched and hard fought.

♦ Jeers to the Nevada State Athletic Commission judges who did such an atrocious job scoring the undercard fights in which Demetrius Hopkins and Daniel Ponce De Leon received highly questionable decisions over Steve Forbes and Gerry Penalosa, respectively.

♦ Cheers to HBO for traveling to Europe to televise the Mikkel Kessler-Librado Andrade fight, a match between two guys most Americans have never heard of but one that deserved widespread exposure nonetheless.

♦ Jeers to HBO for traveling to Europe to televise the Wladimir Klitschko-Ray Austin travesty, a sick joke masquerading as a "heavyweight championship" bout.

♦ Cheers to grizzled veteran Cruz Carbajal for stepping in on short notice and battling Eric Aiken to an entertaining draw on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights*. Additional cheers to promoter Art Pellulo for having the foresight to have Cruz on site just in case Aiken's original opponent, Valdemir Pereira, failed to pass his physical, which is what eventually happened.

♦ Jeers to Main Events for throwing chronic loser Ralph "Wild, Wild" West in with Calvin Brock. While "The Boxing Banker" understandably needed to ease back into action following his knockout loss to Klitschko, this was matchmaking at its most cynical. West, who lasted less than a round, is now 17-11-1(14) with eight of those losses (and four of the last five) via knockout. Additional jeers to Comcast for televising the farce.

♦ Cheers to Larry Hazzard and the New Jersey boxing commission for pioneering the use of video replays to review a referee's call or lack of a call.

♦ Jeers to Nevada commissioner Keith Kizer for his mealy-mouthed response to Larry Merchant's observation that if video replay was in place in Nevada, it would have clearly shown that referee Jay Nady missed Marco Antonio Barrera's clean knockdown of Marquez in the seventh round.

♦ Finally, cheers to longitme RING columnist Jeff Ryan, who just completed his first marathon, at age 47. There's no truth, however, to the rumor Jeff is on Evander Holyfield's shortlist of future opponents.

♦♦♦

If the Bernard Hopkins-Winky Wright fight, scheduled for July 21, happens and both men weigh in above 168 and no more than 175 pounds, THE RING will recognize the bout as being for the world light heavyweight championship. The fact that they have agreed to fight at a catchweight is immaterial. Hopkins is the light heavyweight champion and anytime he fights a regulation bout and he and his opponent are within the confines of the light heavyweight division, the title is on the line.

Moreover, I recently informed B-Hop of this fact, and he was in total agreement.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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P.O. Box 2029, Dept. 9
Marion, OH 43306-8129
(815) 734-1212
CustSrvc@Kappapublishing.com

The Ring (ISSN: 0035-5410), Vol. 86, No. 7, is published monthly by London Publishing Co., 6198 Butler Pike, Suite 200, Blue Bell, PA 19422. Periodicals postage paid at Blue Bell, PA 19422, and additional post offices. Postmaster: Send change of address notices to: The Ring, P.O. Box 2029, Dept. 9, Marion, OH 43306-8129. Single copy price $7.95 ($9.50 in Canada, £4.75 in U.K.). Subscription price $83.40 in the U.S., $99.00 in Canada and remaining countries. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage. The entire contents of this magazine are copyright ©2007 London Publishing Co. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. Publisher is not responsible for the accuracy or content of any advertisements appearing in this magazine, nor the delivery or quality of merchandise or services offered. No endorsement of any such advertisement is intended or implied. Advertisers and agencies assume liability for claims arising from the content of their advertisements. FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES AND RATES: (215) 643-6385. U.S. and Canadian distribution by Kable Distribution Services Inc., 641 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10022. International distribution by Worldwide Media Service Inc., 115 East 23rd St., New York, NY 10010, U.K. distribution by Comag, Tavistock Rd., West Drayton, Middlesex UB77QE, England.
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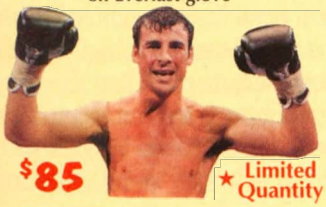

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★ Michael Carbajal
★ Barry McGuigan
★ "Irish" Micky Ward
★ Carlos Palomino
★ Sir Henry Cooper
★ Dwight Qawi
★ Vito Antuofermo
★ Angelo Dundee
★ Angel Manfredy
★ Terry Norris
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★ James "Buster" Douglas
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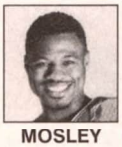

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★ Arguello - Pryor
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★ Norton - Leon Spinks
★ Carbajal - Gonzalez

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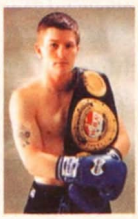

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Benn-McClellan Reunion

When Nigel Benn came face-to-face with Gerald McClellan on the eve of the 12th anniversary of their brutal bout for the WBC super middleweight title in London, he broke down in tears. "I hadn't dealt with it as a person," said Benn. "I had dealt with it as a fighter, but not as a human being."

McClellan was knocked out by Benn in the 10th round of an unremittingly brutal bout at the London Arena on February 25, 1995. McClellan was carried from the ring on a stretcher to be taken to the Royal London Hospital for surgery to remove a blood clot on his brain. His life hung in the balance. That night Benn came to his bedside, kissed McClellan's hand, and said only one word, "Sorry." McClellan survived, but his recovery has only been partial. He is blind and requires round-the-clock care, which is provided by his sisters, Lisa and Sandra, at their homes in Freeport, Illinois, in five-day cycles. After viewing the condition of his erstwhile opponent on a website, Benn, who has become a preacher on the Spanish island of Majorca, felt an overwhelming desire to reach out a helping hand. Together with former British welterweight champion Kevin Lueshing, he organized the benefit dinner at the Grosvenor House Hotel that brought about their emotional reunion, with Lisa accompanying McClellan on his return journey.

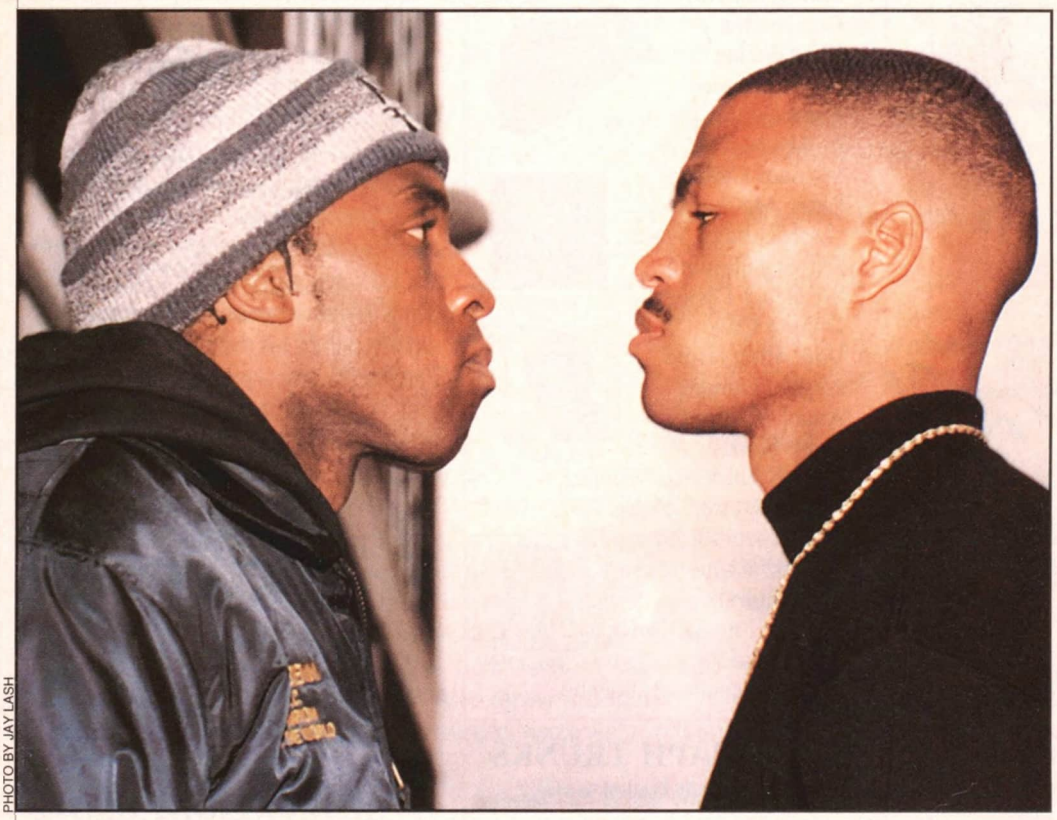


PHOTO BY JAY LASH

Benn and McClellan face off in 1995

"I understand who I am much better today than I did when I was boxing," said Benn, who intends to build his own church in Majorca. "All I wanted to do back then was get into a good tear-up and go out somewhere to party. There was nothing spiritual or wholesome about my life, but the experience of this day will help us all to put into perspective the events of that night and the consequences, which a number of people have had to live with. I can't blame myself because it could have been me, but at least, through God, I'm able to do a little to help.

"I'm thankful that we've been able to meet again, for I've carried the memory and consequences of that night with me for years and now I feel that I can finally move on."

For years, Lisa's pain about her stricken brother was exacerbated by a perception that Benn had no remorse for what he and boxing had done. "But I read some stories about the journey he's been through and a lot of it I didn't learn until recently, and it helped to change my mind," Lisa revealed. "I thought that he had walked away and just continued with his life as normal. I didn't know that he had been affected by the fight, so this is a very emotional reunion for all of us. Gerald made just $67,000 out of the fight, and the insurance ran out a long time ago. The medical costs come to about $82,000 a year, so there are practical benefits to us coming together, and it definitely will heal wounds, probably more so mine than Gerald's."

Organizers were hoping to raise around $200,000 to aid McClellan.

—Brian Doogan

Is Evan Fields The Real Deal?

Speculation has run rampant for over a decade now about Evander Holyfield and alleged steroid use. In early-March, *Sports Illustrated* reporters Luis Fernando Llosa and L. Jon Wertheim dug up information possibly linking the former world heavyweight champion to Applied Pharmacy Services, which was alleged to be at the hub of an illegal steroid distribution network that included pro athletes as clients.

On August 29, 2006, Drug Enforcement Administration agents converged on Applied Pharmacy Services in Mobile, Alabama, seizing client records that revealed the names of over 20 athletes from various sports who allegedly received drugs from Applied. Applied is considered a compounding pharmacy, which means it makes its own drugs generically.

Among the names on the list were baseball players Gary Matthews Jr., Jerry Hairston Jr., and David Bell, former baseball player Jose Canseco, an admitted steroid user, pro wrestling star and 1996 Olympic freestyle wrestling gold medalist Kurt Angle, and someone named "Evan Fields."

Investigators found that Fields had both the same birth date and home address as Holyfield. *Sports Illustrated* followed with a call to Fields—and Holyfield answered the phone.

Files also showed that the patient named Fields picked up three vials of testosterone from a doctor in Columbus, Georgia, traced through Applied. Testosterone, a male steroid hormone, can be used to remedy hypogonadism, a medical term for defective reproductive system and a condition Holyfield said he had. Files also said Holyfield obtained five vials of Saizen, a human growth hormone (HGH).

Holyfield has maintained throughout his career that he has never used steroids or any other chemical enhancement. Holyfield has never tested positive. His explanation for the link with Applied was to purchase medication for his father, who died of a heart ailment in January.

Holyfield released a statement, saying: "I do not use steroids. I have never used steroids. I resent that my name has been linked to known steroid users by sources who refuse to be identified in order to generate publicity for their investigation."

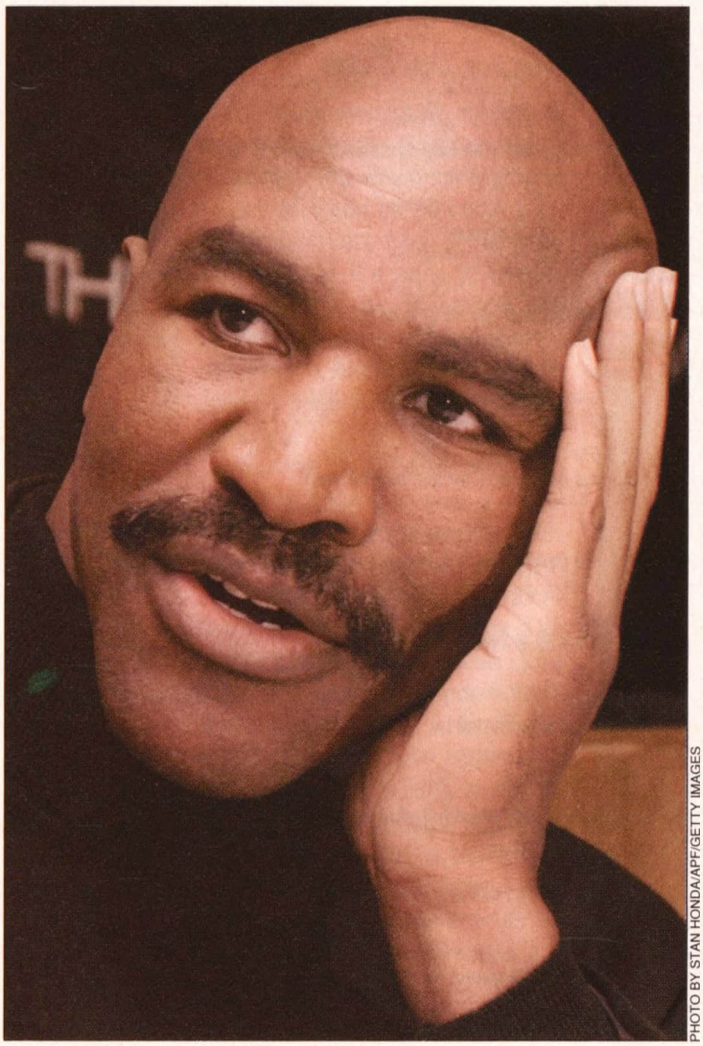


PHOTO BY STAN HONDA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Holyfield is upset he's been linked to steroid scandal

Boxing has been rife with steroid use. James Toney and Fernando Vargas both tested positive for steroids after title fights. Frans Botha was stripped of the IBF heavyweight title he won against Axel Schulz in 1995 after testing positive for steroids, which he and his camp claimed had been used to treat an arm injury, while Tommy Morrison has openly admitted he used steroids during the 1990s.

Roy Jones *and* Richard Hall both tested positive for androstenedione, or Andro, which the U.S. Food and Drug Administration banned in 2004 saying it contained properties similar to steroids, after Jones defeated Hall to retain the world light heavyweight championship, in Indianapolis, Indiana, in May 2000. Jones, like Holyfield, insisted he's never used steroids, instead blaming the positive result on ingesting the supplement Ripped Fuel.

Most recently, Mariano Carrera tested positive for the steroid Clenbuterol after beating Javier Castillejo for the WBA junior middleweight title on December 2, 2006, in Berlin, Germany. Three days later, the Nevada State Athletic Commission suspended Orlando Salido, who beat Robert Guerrero to win the IBF featherweight strap, in Las Vegas on November 4, after his urinalysis revealed the steroid nandrolone.

"I tend to think that it's a much bigger problem than we recognize," said Dr. Margaret Goodman, former chair of the Medical Advisory Board of the Nevada Athletic Commission. "I think boxing for the most part has ignored it."

—Joe Santoliquito

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By William Dettloff

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
2/22/07	Joe Mesi KO 1 George Lindberger	Versus	h	C-	C-	C
Hey, if Mesi keeps fighting guys like Lindberger, he never has to worry about getting hit						
2/22/07	Verquan Kimbrough W 6 Dean White	Versus	l	C-	C-	D+
This should have been a wipeout for Kimbrough, who needs either more confidence or a new trainer						
2/22/07	Humberto Soto KO 3 Humberto Toledo	Versus	jl	B-	D+	C+
The only guy on the card who can fight has to do it in an empty arena; beautiful						
2/23/07	Edvan Barros W 8 Enrique Gutierrez	ESPN2	jm	C+	B+	B-
Barros had no business winning this, but did anyway with balls and right hands; good for him						
2/23/07	Darnell Wilson KO 3 Kelvin Davis	ESPN2	c	B-	C+	B
Who else thinks Wilson looks like a cruiserweight Gary Coleman?						
2/23/07	Mike Marrone W 6 Jermell Barnes	ESPN2	h	C-	C	D
Never thought we'd see a heavyweight that made us wish we were watching Tye Fields instead						
3/2/07	Darrell Woods W 8 Samuel Miller	ESPN2	m	C	B+	B+
Upset! Woods survives harrowing first round to win stirring slugfest; good for him						
3/2/07	Nate Campbell W 12 Ricky Quiles	ESPN2	l	B-	C-	C
Yes, it should have been stopped; and no, this is not a game for the faint-hearted						
3/2/07	Devon Alexander KO 7 Scott Ball	Showtime	jw	C	B	C+
If Alexander persists with that silly barking, we're going to have to insist someone remove his larynx						
3/2/07	Elio Rojas W 10 Johnnie Edwards	Showtime	f	C+	B	B-
Yes, a knockout would have been good, but Edwards is a tough little bastard						
3/3/07	Vic Darchinyan KO 12 Victor Burgos	Showtime	fl	B+	C	C-
It's really time to see Darchinyan against someone who can hit						
3/3/07	**Rafael Marquez KO 7 Israel Vazquez**	**Showtime**	**world jfl**	**A**	**A+**	**B+**
As much as we'd like a rematch, is there anyone who wouldn't pick Marquez?						
3/3/07	Edison Miranda W 10 Allan Green	HBO	m	B+	A-	C+
This wouldn't have been so disappointing if Green hadn't talked such a good game beforehand						
3/3/07	Miguel Cotto KO 11 Oktay Urkal	HBO	w	A	C-	C
If you were wondering why Urkal wasn't coughing up his spleen by the fourth round, you're not alone						
3/9/07	Fernando Beltran W 10 Baudel Cardenas	Telefutura	jf	C+	D+	C-
We wouldn't have blamed Cardenas for sticking to the stool about halfway through here						
3/9/07	Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 3 Raul Munoz	Telefutura	jm	C+	D	B-
Okay, okay, so he hasn't fought anyone yet; trust us: little Chavez is the goods						
3/10/07	Wladimir Klitschko KO 2 Ray Austin	HBO	h	A	F	D-
We know what this says about the IBF; what does it say about Sultan Ibragimov?						

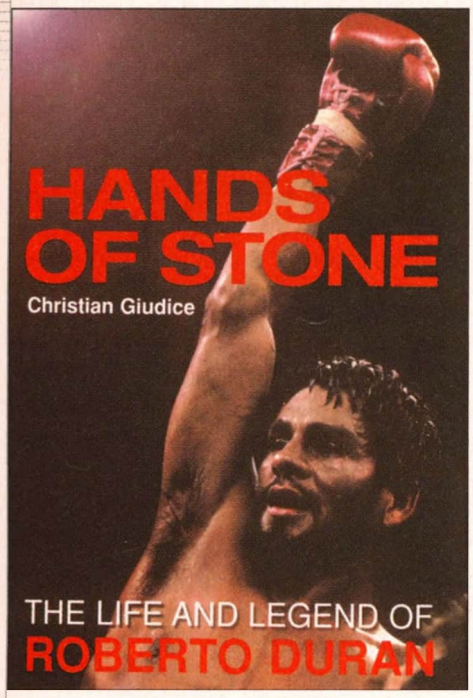
Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net;Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino; Versus

Boxing Bookshelf



Perfectly timed for his June induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame comes *Hands Of Stone: The Life And Legend Of Roberto Duran* (Milo Books, hardback, 320 pages, $24.96) by Christian Giudice, a biography worthy of a first-ballot inductee and a riveting read from the first page to last.

Giudice originally spent three months in Panama in 2002, but realized he needed to learn Spanish if he was going to be able to complete the project. So he went back to Temple University in Philadelphia, where he'd previously earned a journalism degree, studied the language six to eight hours a day, and then returned to Panama.

The result is a scrupulously researched book that covers Duran's life and career in such painstaking detail that you come away with a far greater understanding of who Duran really is and what made him that way. As is frequently the case with public figures, there are conflicting stories surrounding many incidents in Duran's life, and Giudice wisely reserves judgment and gives as many versions as possible by quoting numerous sources.

Besides interviewing friends, family members, and business associates, the author tracked down many of Duran's ring foes, whose stories give readers some inkling of what it's like to trade punches with a man who once said he would "kayo God if he had to."

The one aspect of Duran's life that virtually everybody agreed on was his poverty-stricken childhood, when he would carry around a crust of bread so he could wipe up the leftovers from other people's plates. It's easy to understand why Duran developed into such an uncompromising fighter—and why he lived so extravagantly once he began to earn huge sums of money.

Giudice provides enough Panamanian history to give a social context to Duran's remarkable life, and the description of his downtrodden homeland is so vivid you sometimes feel like you're riding shotgun as the author makes his rounds. You also get a sense of the indomitable spirit of the people from which Duran emerged, a street-savvy ragamuffin who conquered the boxing world but never forgot where he came from.

Those looking for a definitive explanation of Duran's infamous "No Mas" fight with Ray Leonard will be disappointed, but many theories are forwarded. Frankly, I doubt if even Duran knows why he did what he did.

If there is a single theme that resonates throughout the book it is the great love the Panamanian people have for Duran. He never distanced himself from his roots and gave away thousands of dollars to the needy. In time, they even forgave him for the "No Mas" debacle, and if ever a boxer will live forever in the hearts of his countrymen, it is Duran.

It's unusual for the first biography of a famous person to be the definitive version, but that just might be the case with *Hands Of Stone*.

—Nigel Collins

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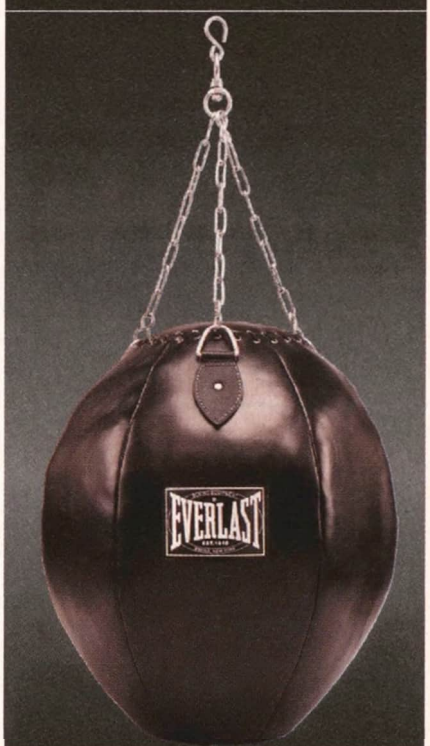

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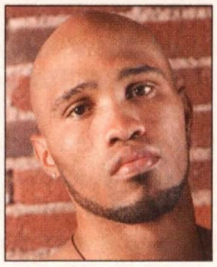
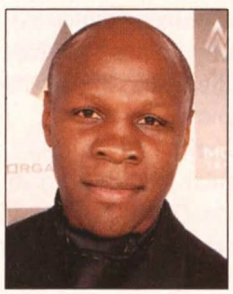
Outside the Ropes

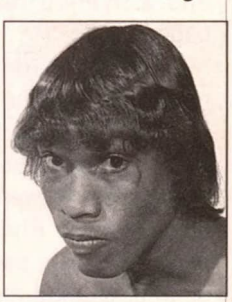
Middleweight **Ishe Smith** was the villain in the first season of *The Contender*, but that was just a reality TV show. Smith became a *real life* hero in March when his wife, **LaToya**, gave birth to the couple's first daughter, **Nolani**, on the floor of the garage at their Summerlin, Nevada, home. As they were preparing to leave for the hospital, LaToya looked down and saw her daughters head appear. Ishe called 911 and the dispatcher talked him through the birth. "The baby literally just came shooting out," Smith told *Las Vegas Journal-Review* boxing writer **Kevin Iole**. "[The dispatcher] was calm and she kept me calm. She just told me step-by-step what I needed to do." When the paramedics arrived, he had already tied the umbilical cord with his shoelace and his 7-pound, 2-ounce daughter was being cradled in her mother's arms. "It was something none of us will ever forget," Smith said. "Someone definitely was looking out for us" ... Former featherweight contender **Mike Ayala**, 46-6 (24), has been inducted into the National Hispanic Sports Hall of Fame. Ayala, who fought professionally from 1975 until 1991, lost to then-WBC featherweight titleholder **Danny Lopez** in THE RING's 1979 Fight of the Year ... In early-February, former WBO middleweight and super middleweight titleholder **Chris Eubank** was arrested on suspicion of breaching the peace after driving his truck, with a banner attacking British Prime Minister **Tony Blair** mounted on it, through the Whitehall section of London. Antiwar activist Eubank was protesting the deployment of **Prince Harry**, the 22-year-old third heir to the throne, to fight in Iraq ... HBO blow-by-blow announcer **Jim Lampley**, 57, was sentenced to three years probation, 52 weeks of counseling, and 40 hours of community service after pleading no-contest to violating a restraining order in San Diego, California. After sentencing, Lampley issued a statement, which in part read: "It is with considerable regret and deep embarrassment that I acknowledge having overreacted to a household dispute with **Candice Sanders** on New Year's Eve. As a result of my anger, our dispute has become a matter of public discussion and speculation and I accept responsibility for that ... I am offering my full and unconditional apology to Miss Sanders and her family, as well as to all my friends, family, and professional colleagues who have been unwarrantedly damaged by events of that night" ... *Boston Globe* boxing writer **Ron Borges** was suspended for two months without pay after allegations he had plagiarized a portion of a football column from another sportswriter. Borges was also barred from broadcasting for two months. "*The Globe* does not tolerate plagiarism," said the Globe's editor, **Martin Baron** ... The Nevada State Athletic Commission has suspended junior flyweight **Omar Nino** for nine months and fined him $18,750 after the fighters tested positive for amphetamines following his November 2006 draw with **Brian Viloria**. The NSAC also changed the result to a no-contest ... The WBA has reinstated **Javier Castillejo** as its middleweight titleholder after **Mariano Carrera**, who scored an eighth-round TKO of Castillejo in December 2006, tested positive for the banned substance Clembuterol. The original result was changed to a disqualification win for Castillejo ... The IBF has awarded **Lovemore Ndou** its junior welterweight belt that was vacated by world champion **Ricky Hatton**. "Had we known on February 4, 2007, that Hatton was not going to defend his title, the Ndou-(**Naoufel**) **Ben Rabah** fight would have been for the vacant title," explained IBF championship Chairman **Lindsey Ticker**. Ndou tallied an 11th-round TKO of Rabah in February ... Former bantamweight contender **Nestor "Baba" Jimenez**, 60, died in Colombia on March 12. Jimenez, who fought professionally from 1967 until 1981, twice unsuccessfully challenged for the WBC 118-pound belt, losing to **Rudolfo Martinez** in '75 and **Wilfredo Gomez** in '79. Jimenez was 67-16-2 (23) overall ... Lightweight **Joey Olguin**, 66, died of cancer on March 11. Olguin, who was a popular attraction in both his native New Mexico and California, built a 24-4 (18) record between 1959 and '68 ... California trainer **Manuel "Chato" Robles Sr.** died on March 3 due to complications of pneumonia. Robles, who worked out of the Azteca and Maywood gyms, trained fighters for the Espinoza Boxing Club for 15 years. Among the outstanding boxers he helped develop were **Israel Vazquez**, **Martin Castillo**, and **Reggie Johnson** ... Trainer **Theo Mthembu**, 79, died following a short illness in his native South Africa. Mthembu, who began as boxer and once challenged for the South African featherweight title, had his career curtailed when he was shot and wounded. When he recovered from his injuries, he pursued a career as a trainer and later became a respected boxing writer. Mthembu's best-know fighter was **Baby Jake Matlala**.



Smith: Makes emergency deliver



Eubank: Arrested in anti-war protest



Jimenez: Dead at age 60

Quotable

"Although I'm flattered that the boxing community is eager to have me back in the ring, I have no plans to return. I have no idea how these rumors get started, but I'm a man of my word—I will remain retired."

—Former heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis squashing rumors that he would come out of retirement to face old foe Vitali Klitschko

"The Versus boxing series, launched in 2006, has been a huge disappointment. Let me be blunt: It sucks."

*—**Boxing News** correspondent Zackary Levin, commenting on the overall quality of Versus' boxing cards*

Ratings Analysis

For Period Ended March 19, 2007

Heavyweights: No changes.

Cruiserweights: Jean-Marc Mormeck (first last issue) regains the world cruiserweight title, switching places with former champion O'Neil Bell. The move drops Krzysztof Wlodarczyk and Steve Cunningham one place each. Darnell Wilson enters at 10, replacing Virgil Hill.

Light Heavyweights: Zsolt Erdei (second last issue) moves to number one, switching places with inactive Antonio Tarver.

Super Middleweights: No changes.

Middleweights: Mariano Carrera (fourth last issue) exits due to failed drug test following his bout with Javier Castillejo (fifth last issue). Castillejo moves up to four, while Amin Asikainen (seventh last issue) leaps to five. Felix Sturm, Sebastian Sylvester, and Kelly Pavlik all move up one place, creating an opening for Sergio Mora at 10.

Junior Middleweights: No changes.

Welterweights: The surging Miguel Cotto (fourth last issue) switches with Carlos Baldomir (third last issue).

Junior Welterweights: DeMarcus Corley (sixth last issue) exits due to inactivity, moving everyone from six through 10 up one place. Andreas Kotelnik debuts at 10.

Lightweight: No changes.

Junior Lightweights: Juan Manuel Marquez enters at number two thanks to his win over Marco Antonio Barrera (second last issue). This shifts everyone previously ranked two through 10 down one place and pushes out Alex Arthur (10th last issue).

Featherweights: With Juan Manuel Marquez campaigning at 130, everyone from two to 10 moves up one place. Oscar Larios enters at number 10.

Junior Featherweights: Rafael Marquez becomes world champion after stopping Israel Vazquez, who falls to two. That moves everyone formerly rated two through seven down one place. Jhonny Gonzalez (eighth last issue) leaves to campaign at bantamweight. Gerry Penalosa enters at number 10.

Bantamweights: Rafael Marquez' departure moves everyone from two to four up one place. Jhonny Gonzalez enters at five.

Junior Bantamweights: No changes.

Flyweights: Lorenzo Parra (second last issue) and Victor Burgos (eighth last issue) each depart after getting stopped in their last fights. Vic Darchinyan (third last issue) and Omar Narvaez (fourth last issue) each move up one place, while Roberto Vazquez (sixth last issue), Takefumi Sakata (seventh last issue), Luis Maldonado (ninth last issue), and Daisuke Naito (10th last issue) jump up two spots each. Jose Lopez and Wandee Singwangcha debut at nine and 10, respectively.

Junior Flyweights: Brian Viloria (fifth last issue) moves to four, switching places with Omar Nino (fourth last issue) after Nino's failed drug test changed the result of their 12-round draw to a no-contest.

Strawweights: No changes.

Pound-For-Pound: Major shakeup as Rafael Marquez (seventh last issue) vaults to three and Juan Manuel Marquez moves to four based on their recent success. The changes move Winky Wright (third last issue), Jermain Taylor (fourth last issue), and Bernard Hopkins (fifth last issue) down two places each. Marco Antonio Barrera (sixth last issue) sinks to nine, and Ricky Hatton (ninth last issue) is bumped down to 10. Shane Mosley (10th last issue) departs to make room for Juan Manuel Marquez.

The RING
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
3. **Rafael Marquez**
   Bantamweight
4. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Junior Lightweight
5. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
6. **Jermain Taylor**
   Middleweight
7. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
8. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Super Middleweight
9. **Marco Antonio Barrera**
   Junior Lightweight
10. **Ricky Hatton**
    Junior Welterweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended March 19, 2007

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Takefumi Sakata vaults to fifth at flyweight after stopping Lorenzo Parra

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

The Ring Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of The Ring Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 48-3 (43)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 28-1 (22)
3. **OLEG MASKAEV** Staten Island, NY 34-5 (26)
4. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 46-0 (34)
5. **SHANNON BRIGGS** Brooklyn, NY 48-4-1 (42)
6. **SERGEI LIAKHOVICH** Belarus, 23-2 (14)
7. **LAMON BREWSTER** Los Angeles, CA 33-3 (29)
8. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 69-6-3 (43)
9. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 22-0-1 (17)
10. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 41-7-1 (28)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-3 (11)
2. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 35-2-1 (22)
3. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 25-3-1 (15)
4. **SERGEI DZINDZIRUK** Germany 33-0 (21)
5. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-4 (30)
6. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 38-2 (28)
7. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 25-0 (19)
8. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-4-1 (31)
9. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 41-10-1 (21)
10. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Canada 28-0 (18)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 39-0-1 (20)
2. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 31-3-1 (18)
3. **RODOLFO LOPEZ** Mexico 19-3-1 (13)
4. **TAKASHI KOSHIMOTO** Japan 39-1-2 (17)
5. **ROBERT GUERRERO** Gilroy, CA 20-2-1 (13)
6. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 26-0-1 (19)
7. **NICKY COOK** England 27-0 (15)
8. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 31-0-2 (22)
9. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 22-3-1 (12)
10. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 58-5-1 (37)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: RAFAEL MARQUEZ Mexico 37-3 (33)

1. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 26-2 (18)
2. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ** Mexico 41-4 (31)
3. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 29-1-2 (19)
4. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 46-2-1 (37)
5. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 31-1 (28)
6. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 25-0 (15)
7. **GABULA VABAZA** South Africa 23-0-1 (5)
8. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 23-0 (9)
9. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 26-3 (17)
10. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 51-6-2 (34)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 21-2 (7)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 52-3-2 (37)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 19-0-2 (6)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 19-2 (15)
5. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 33-5 (28)
6. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN** Thailand 67-9 (44)
7. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 35-5 (20)
8. **IRENE PACHECO** Colombia 33-1 (24)
9. **SIMONE MALUDROTTU** Italy 25-1 (10)
10. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 27-1 (18)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: JEAN-MARC MORMECK
France 33-3 (22)

1. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 26-2-1 (24)
2. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 37-1 (27)
3. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 19-1 (10)
4. **DAVID HAYE**
England 18-1 (17)
5. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 23-0-1 (16)
6. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
Wales 25-1 (19)
7. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 26-3-1 (18)
8. **MARCO HUCK**
Germany 18-0 (13)
9. **JOHNATHON BANKS**
Detroit, MI 15-0 (11)
10. **DARNELL WILSON**
Tacoma Park, MD 21-5 3(18)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 47-4-1 (32)

1. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 26-0 (16)
2. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 24-4 (18)
3. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 40-3-1 (24)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 44-11-2 (29)
5. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 24-0 (15)
6. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 31-1 (21)
7. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 26-3 (18)
8. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 50-4 (38)
9. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 41-3 (25)
10. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 27-2 (14)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 42-0 (31)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 38-0 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 28-3 (22)
3. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 22-1 (17)
4. **MARKUS BEYER**
Germany 34-3-1 (13)
5. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 24-0 (18)
6. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 19-0 (16)
7. **CARL FROCH**
England 20-0 (16)
8. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 23-1 (16)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
Germany 30-0 (23)
10. **PETER MANFREDO JR.**
Pawtucket, RI 26-3 (12)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: JERMAIN TAYLOR
Little Rock, AR 26-0-1 (17)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-3-1 (25)
2. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 22-0 (17)
3. **EDISON MIRANDA**
Colombia 28-1 (24)
4. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 62-6 (41)
5. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 20-0 (14)
6. **SAM SOLIMAN**
Australia 33-9 (13)
7. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 26-2 (12)
8. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 25-2 (11)
9. **KELLY PAVLIK**
Youngstown, OH 30-0 (27)
10. **SERGIO MORA**
Los Angeles, CA 19-0 (4)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 37-0 (24)

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 34-4 (24)
2. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 44-4 (37)
3. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 29-0 (24)
4. **CARLOS BALDOMIR**
Argentina 43-10-6 (13)
5. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 34-4 (25)
6. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 27-3 (13)
7. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 27-1 (25)
8. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 38-4 (12)
9. **ARTURO GATTI**
Jersey City, NJ 40-8 (31)
10. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 32-0 (24)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 42-0 (30)

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
Mexico 55-7-1 (47)
2. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 35-1-2 (20)
3. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 28-2-1 (18)
4. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 44-8-1 (29)
5. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 35-1-1 (20)
6. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 37-4-1 (27)
7. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 26-0-1 (10)
8. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 21-1 (12)
9. **HERMAN NGOUDJO**
Canada 15-1 (9)
10. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
Germany 27-2-1 (12)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR
Miami, FL 34-3-1 (21)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 31-0 (15)
2. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 34-3 (25)
3. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 32-1-1 (17)
4. **NATE CAMPBELL**
Jacksonville, FL 30-5-1 (24)
5. **ALMAZBEK RAIYMKULOV**
Las Vegas, NV 24-1-1 (14)
6. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 27-2 (16)
7. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
Mexico 42-4 (29)
8. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 24-2 (13)
9. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 22-0 (20)
10. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 18-2 (12)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 43-3-2 (34)
2. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 47-3-1 (35)
3. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 63-5 (42)
4. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 27-0 (17)
5. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 48-5 (34)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 46-3-1 (33)
7. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 21-0 (21)
8. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 41-5-2 (25)
9. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 27-3 (19)
10. **VICENTE MOSQUERA**
Panama 24-2-1 (12)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 10-0 (5)
2. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 30-2 (16)
3. **LUIS PEREZ**
Nicaragua 24-1 (15)
4. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 33-2-1 (24)
5. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
Mexico 30-3-2 (12)
6. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 28-2 (26)
7. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 46-3-1 (35)
8. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 30-6 (20)
9. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 24-2 (10)
10. **PRAMUANSAK POSUWAN**
Thailand 35-1-1 (19)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 64-2 (33)
2. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 28-0 (22)
3. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 24-0-2 (15)
4. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 24-1 (17)
5. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 28-4-1 (13)
6. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 21-2 (8)
7. **LUIS MALDONADO**
Mexico 36-1-1 (28)
8. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 30-2-2 (19)
9. **JOSE LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 35-7-2 (29)
10. **WANDEE SINGWANGCHA**
Thailand 51-7-1 (11)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: HUGO CAZARES
Mexico 24-3-1 (18)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 23-1-2 (17)
2. **JUAN LANDAETA**
Venezuela 20-5-1 (16)
3. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 24-3-2 (13)
4. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 19-1 (12)
5. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 24-2-1 (10)
6. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
Mexico 34-5-1 (20)
7. **NOBUAKI MASUDA**
Japan 23-3-1 (3)
8. **OMAR SALADO**
Mexico 14-0-2 (7)
9. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 26-5 (14)
10. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Mexico 17-0-1 (13)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **IVAN CALDERON**
Puerto Rico 27-0 (6)
2. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 20-1-3 (8)
3. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 61-5-5 (31)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 17-1 (6)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 18-2 (7)
6. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 37-4-1 (30)
7. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 23-1 (18)
8. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
Mexico 24-8-3 (13)
9. **ERIBERTO GEJON**
Philippines 21-1-1 (13)
10. **PORNSAWAN KRATINGDAENGGYM**
Thailand 17-0 (13)

By Jeff Ryan

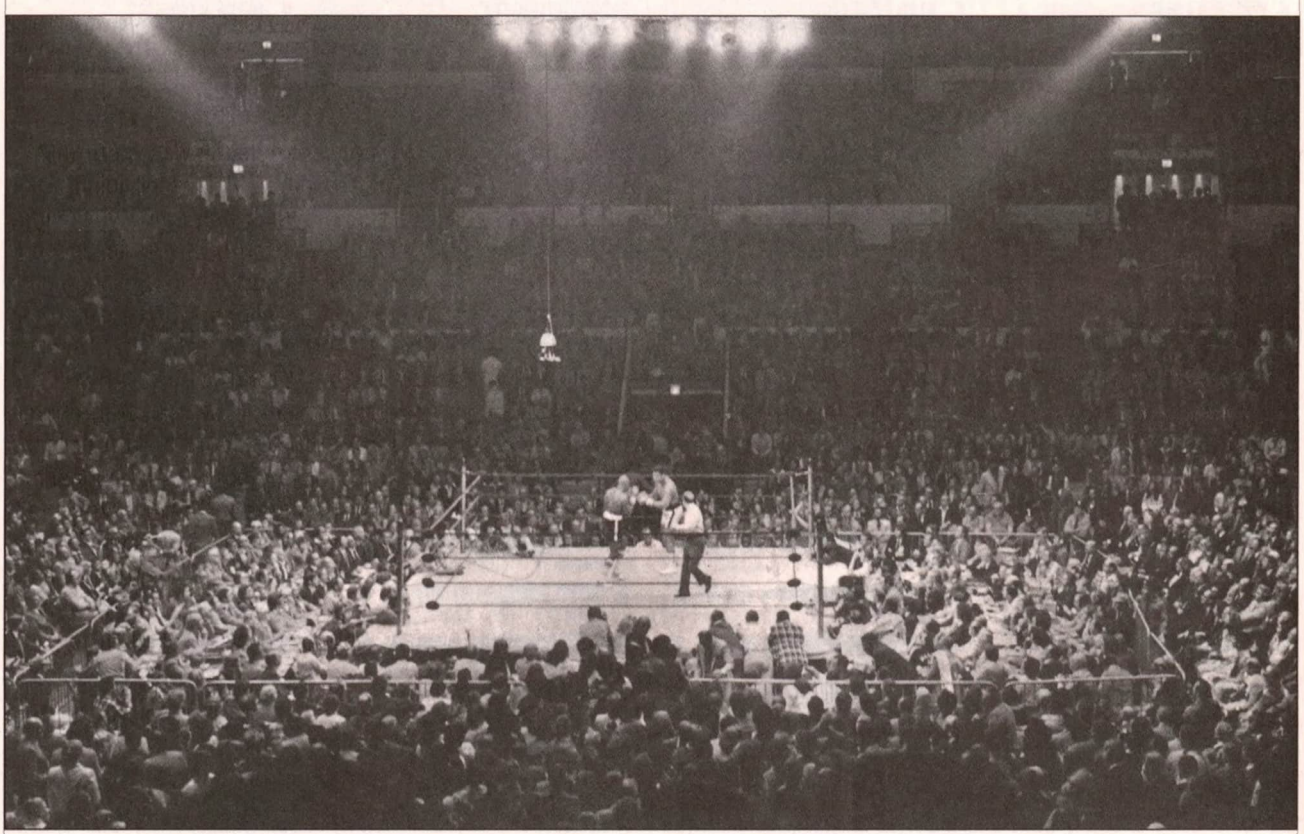
The 50 Most Grating Moments

The people who run Madison Square Garden like to call it "The World's Most Famous Arena," and they're right. To be more specific, it's the world's most famous *boxing* arena. Sure, the building has a fabulous basketball and hockey history, but the most famous hoops venue is probably the late Boston Garden and its hockey counterpart would be either the departed Montreal Forum or the discarded Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto.

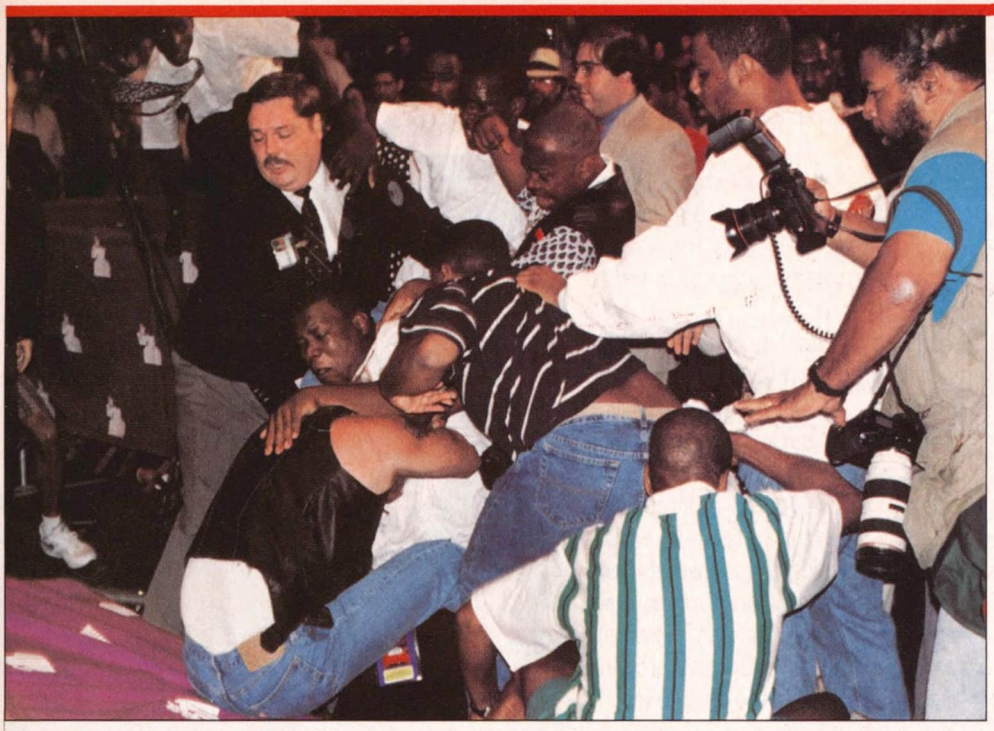
In compiling its eagerly anticipated list of *The 50 Greatest Moments At Madison Square Garden*, however, the MSG Network obviously concluded that any night on which a boxing ring was set up in the building was just a wasted evening that killed time between Knicks and Rangers games. It's not surprising that the network's producers wanted to kiss up to the hoops and hockey nuts who tune in to MSG k nightly to watch their heroes' perpetual dance with mediocrity and quest for the final playoff spots in their respective conferences. But they did so at the expense of some unforgettable fight nights.

Simply put, the MSG Network treated boxing fans like the biggest suckers this side of Jorge Arce's lollipop. Only six fight nights made the list: Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier I (third place), Rocky Marciano-Joe Louis (eighth), Mark Breland winning a fifth Golden Gloves title (24th), Louis-Jersey Joe Walcott I (27th), Roberto Duran-Davey Moore (42nd), and Lennox Lewis-Evander Holyfield I (50th). While some fight enthusiasts have argued that Ali-Frazier should have claimed the top spot, it's no slight to have rated the Knicks' 1970 NBA title first and the Rangers 1994 Stanley Cup championship second. After all, the Knicks had never won a crown before and the Rangers last celebrated one 54 years earlier.

My problem is with some of the other rankings. With the countless great battles at MSG, how in the world does Lewis-Holyfield, remembered for controversial scoring rather than a single second of action, make the cut? How can Andrew Golota-Riddick Bowe I, which sparked a riot, not be considered more memorable? What about Bob Foster's dramatic kayo of Dick Tiger? Where was Ali-Frazier II? It may



Ali-Shavers was one of many memorable moments that didn't make the cut



How could the Bowe-Golta riot not be considered memorable?

not have been a classic war, but it was certainly a great event. Isn't Duran's infamous low blow delivered to Ken Buchanan a more lasting Garden memory than the concert for Hurricane Katrina? Does anyone even remember who played at the concert for Hurricane Katrina? (Benefit concerts seemed to be a particular favorite of the list-makers. The concert for Katrina, for Bangladesh, for New York City post 9-11, for no nukes.)

Ali-Oscar Bonavena or Ali-Earnie Shavers should have been on the list before—for crying out loud—the inaugural game of the WNBA's New York Liberty. UConn winning a Big East basketball tournament got recognition in-stead of Esteban De-Jesus flooring and upsetting Duran. John McEnroe winning a second-tier tennis tournament in 1979 got the nod over Henry Armstrong decisioning Lou Ambers in 1938, a win that made "Hammerin' Henry" a world champion in three weight classes simultaneously. And a meaningless NHL All-Star Game beat out that memorable night in 1984 when Holyfield, Breland, Pernell Whitaker, Virgil Hill, and Meldrick Taylor, five future titlists, made their pro debuts.

Perhaps the omission of a lot of great Garden boxing moments wouldn't have been so irritating if it wasn't for the fact that too many "moments" on the list weren't actual moments at all: a string of Billy Joel concerts, the Rangers upsetting the Islanders in 1979 over the course of six games, basketball star Pearl Washington playing for Syracuse at the

PHOTO BY AL BELLO

List makers also ignored Norris-Leonard

Personal Perceptions:

The last word on everything from a harried man to a hairy man:

• News that Johnny Tapia was hospitalized in March after overdosing on cocaine was upsetting, but hardly shocking. If a majority decision over Evaristo Primero in February really *was* Tapia's ring finale, then we should all join hands in prayer and get used to holding our collective breath.

• To prepare for her spot on *Dancing With The Stars*, did Laila Ali study tapes of Daddy darting around Cleveland Williams and Sonny Liston?

• If Bernard Hopkins was going to come back, why did he wait so long? By the time he squares off with Winky Wright in July, the 42-year-old Hopkins will have been inactive for 13 months. And you can bet he knew for at least 11 of them that retirement wasn't his cup of Gatorade. If we've learned anything these past several years it's to never question anything "The Executioner" does. He's made us all look like dopes in the past. But there's an extremely fine line between resting/recharging an aging body and growing stale at an age when it's almost impossible to get the edge back.

• A win by Wright on July 21 just might send him to the keyboard to start drafting his Hall of Fame speech. And how unlikely would that have seemed just a few years ago? If he beats The Executioner, Wright will have conquered Hopkins, Shane Mosley (twice), Felix Trinidad, and Ike Quartey, and fought Jermain Taylor to a draw. Guys have landed in Canastota with less on their resumes.

• John Duddy is so protected that you expect to see him traveling with a phalanx of Secret Service agents.

• If Fahsan 3-K Battery is scheduled to do battle, but is scratched from the card at the last minute, the guy at the box office should be required to warn ticket buyers, "Battery's not included."

• A March show in Worcester, Massachusetts, featured 385-pound Butterbean vs. 310-pound Joe Siciliano. (*Siciliano* in Italian means, "My body's the size of Sicily.") On the undercard was the pro debut of The Bean's son, 280-pound Brandon Esch. What the hell did they use for a dressing room that night? An airplane hangar. No, folks, that's not a box of toothpicks that spilled on the ground. It's what left of the ring stools.

• Here's wishing HBO's Jim Lampley luck in overcoming his personal woes.

• Yes, Lennox Lewis-Vitali Klitschko II is intriguing, but not when both guys have been on the sidelines longer than the original first-down marker at the Cotton Bowl.

• The next person who refers to Nicolay Valuev's "attempt to break Marciano's record of 49-0" should be banished to a tiny jail cell that contains nothing more than a cot, a toilet, and a VCR that plays tapes of *American Idol* 24 hours a day. Marciano's mark is special because he *retired* undefeated after facing solid competition. If Valuev goes 55-0, and then loses, guess what: He didn't break the record!

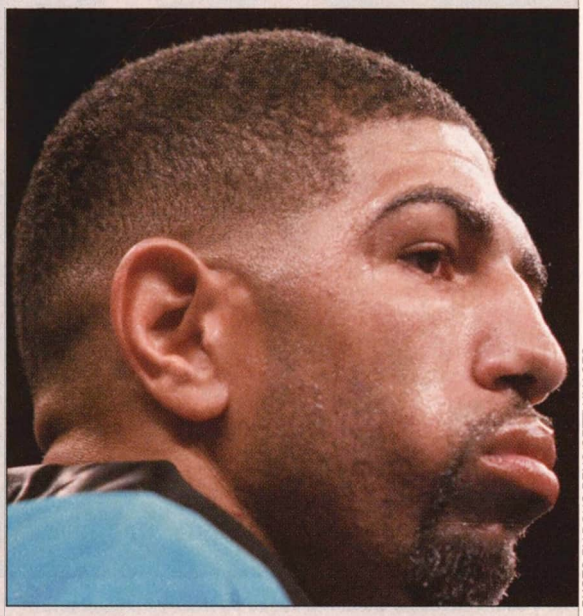
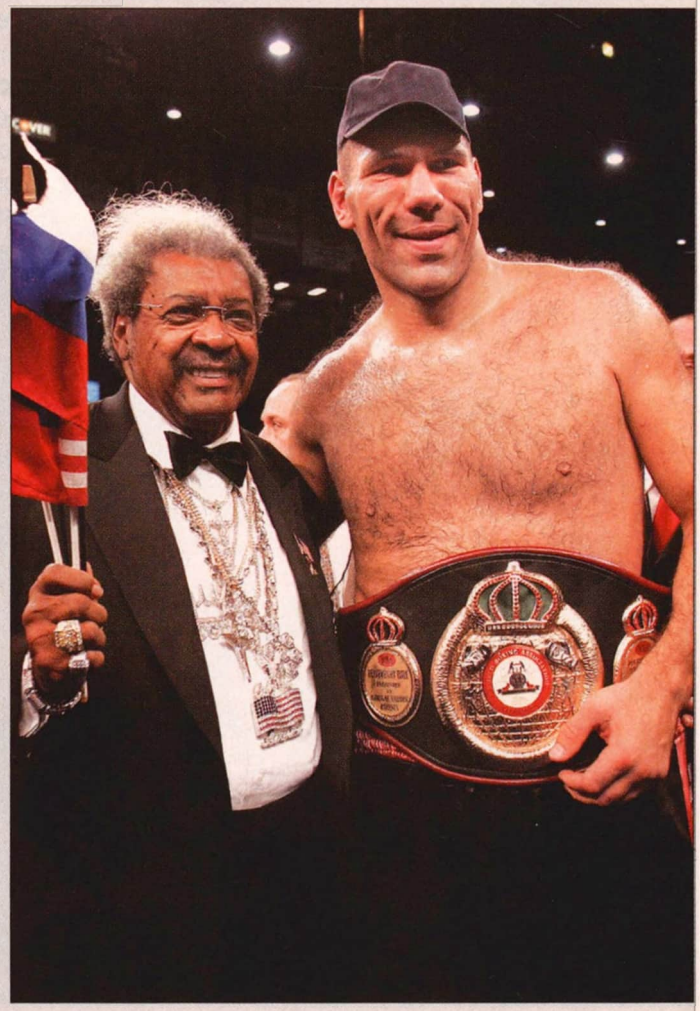


PHOTO BY DOUG BENC/GETTY IMAGES

Winky: Headed to the Hall?



Valuev: No threat to Marciano

Garden over a three-year period. There was no room left, apparently, for Joe Frazier's destruction of Jimmy Ellis or Terry Norris sending Sugar Ray Leonard back into retirement. And while it wouldn't have fit with the feel-good mood of the series, how could any list of memorable Garden moments not include the Emile Griffith-Benny Paret tragedy?

As was mentioned in a previous column, an ad in the Rangers' pocket schedule for the 2006-'07 season promised a Rangers moment in every episode of the series, which suggests the list was manipulated at the very least. Consider the importance of the hockey fan versus the fight fan to the bottom line of the folks at 34th Street and Eighth Avenue, and we can better understand just what the puck the MSG Network was thinking.

Evan Fields Forever: There's no acne on my back, and my triceps haven't torn apart the sleeves of my shirts, but consider me one of those ticking time bombs suffering from a bad case of 'roid rage. Yes, the topic of steroids in the fight game has put me in quite the foul mood these days. Reports that Holyfield allegedly purchased testosterone and human growth hormone from an Alabama manufacturer makes me want to strangle somebody. And since my mitts wouldn't fit around Holyfield's wrists, let alone his neck, that somebody is probably the next guy who cuts me off on the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Boxing is forever viewed as the junk heap of pro athletics, but for years it's been able to jut out its glass jaw proudly when it comes to overcoming many of the ills befalling the rest of the sports world. The fight game has never had a problem giving important jobs to minorities, its athletes don't charge into the stands to brawl with fans, it tests for drugs and steroids after its title fights (we know for sure that Manny Pacquiao wasn't under the influence when he kayoed Erik Morales, but we don't know for certain if a World Series MVP was clean on his big day), and though boxing has its share of off-field incidents, people don't usually end up dead the way they do too often when NBA and NFL players gather in great numbers.

But steroid use, which was once foreign to boxing, is unfortunately now becoming associated with the game. Tommy Morrison's admission and Frans Botha's failed test didn't really register on the radar years ago. Fans learned of James Toney getting caught, remembered what his gut looked like, and concluded the juice couldn't have possibly given him an unfair advantage. Roy Jones and Richard Hall? Hey, they used andro, which was once legal. Mariano Carrera and Orlando Salido? Not in the orbit of the mainstream media. Holyfield, though, is another story.

We're talking about a future Hall of Famer and one of the true superstars of the past 20 years. He's boxing's Barry Bonds, Mark McGwire, or Sammy Sosa. He's the guy whose career contains so many glorious achievements (the upset of Tyson, turning back George Foreman, capturing a version of the heavyweight belt four times) that even rumors of cheating cast suspicion over everything he's accomplished and could become a public relations fiasco. Holyfield has denied ever using steroids, and has never failed a test for them, but there is no reliable test to detect human growth hormone.

Perhaps Holyfield's best argument that he's clean is the investigation's claim that under the alias of Evan Fields (hey, that'll fool 'em), he bought testosterone and growth hormone in June 2004. Since then, he's lost to Larry Donald, kayoed Jeremy Bates, and struggled to a unanimous decision (by a point on two of the three cards) over an uninspired Fres Oquendo. That's hardly the equivalent of Bonds turning on a fastball and driving it 450 feet.

And to think that they're called "performance-enhancing" drugs. ■

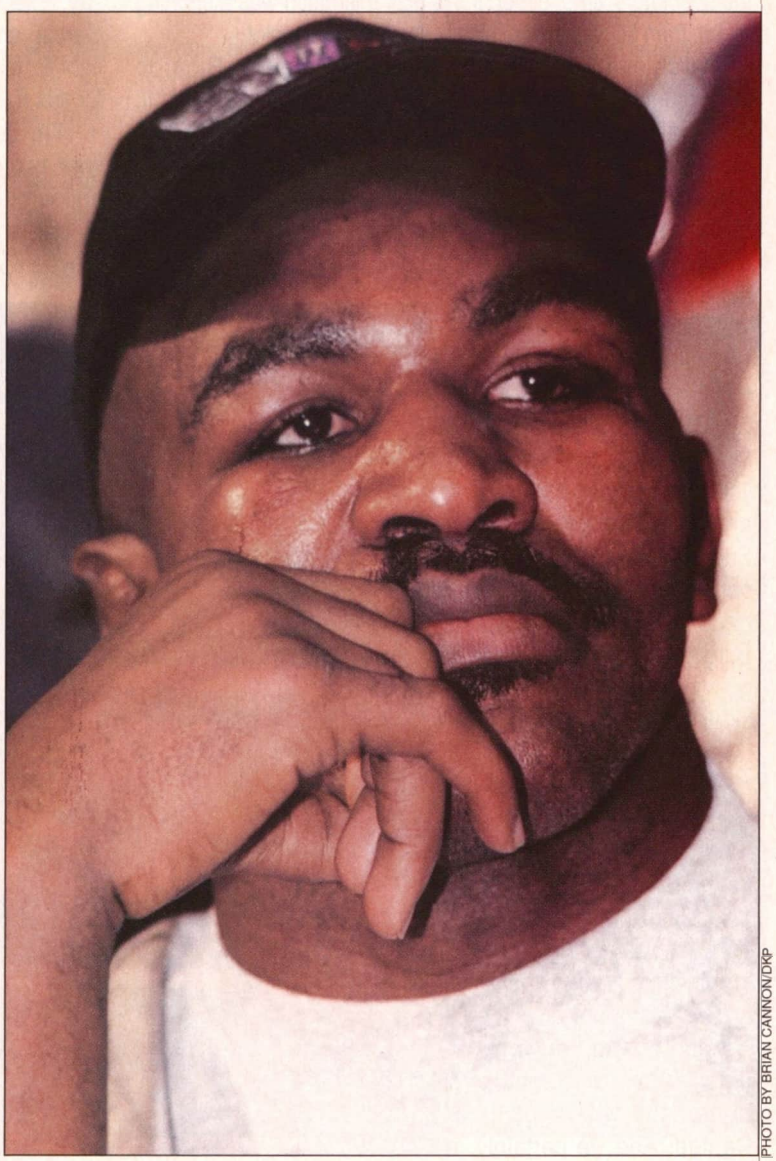


PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON/DKP

When Holyfield is involved, people pay attention

By Ivan Goldman

The Python vs. The Piglet

After several rounds of watching Vic Darchinyan lumber around the canvas like a mutant crab in pursuit of brave little Victor Burgos, I started wondering why this pointless spectacle was continuing.

It wasn't much of a fight, and every round was the same as the last. I mean, I'm a fight writer, I'm prepared to see violence, but solving the mystery of whether the rugged little Aussie by way of Armenia could trap the challenger and get him out of there was clearly not worth the risk to Burgos. It wasn't worth the spectators' time, either. If this ugly mismatch was a sporting event, then so is a python slowly swallowing a piglet.

Darchinyan could have stuck his face out Ricardo Mayorga-style to absorb Burgos' best shot and laughed it off, especially as the fight wore on and Burgos weakened. Meanwhile Darchinyan, though fighting out of a sort of wrestler's crouch and absurdly telegraphing his left, threw quick, powerful punches that took a steady toll. What kind of cornermen would send Burgos out, round after round, for more punishment?

But Burgos kept throwing pitty-pat punches, which, according to standard procedure, seemed to leave referee Jon Schorle little leeway, and the non-entertainment continued. Sure enough, following the script laid down by Murphy's Law, an unconscious Burgos was rolled out on a gurney, bleeding inside his skull—but only after 11½ rounds of python-versus-piglet.

"You know," said Don King's matchmaker Bobby Goodman, "even when he fought at 108 pounds, Victor was not very big for his weight class."

But this is not anything we can blame on King's organization, which got its fighter the title shot he wanted. And we certainly can't blame it on Darchinyan. Protect yourself at all times is the number one ring rule. You keep hitting the other guy until the bell rings, he falls down, or somebody jumps between you.

Allow me to quote something pertinent: "The referee shall stop a contest when a contestant shows a marked superiority, or is apparently outclassed." Section 18733 of the California rulebook needs no interpretation. Presumably the rule applied at the Home Depot Center in Carson, California. The rule needs only someone to act on it, somebody like, say, Executive Director Armando Garcia, who was ringside. Garcia, an ex-cop, ex-referee from Florida needs to use this fight to teach California referees that there is a correct time for this rule to be applied.

(I'm being told that after emergency surgery Burgos was brought out of his coma and the prognosis was encouraging. My thoughts are truly with him and his family, but I'm a little superstitious, and if I act like he's okay, maybe it will help make it so.)

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Darchinyan outclassed and outpunched little Burgos from the start

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Burgos was down numerous times, but referee Schorle ruled only one a knockdown

Commissions' rulebooks tend to be similar, and you can bet most, if not all, of them have a clause that reads like Section 18733, and most of them don't follow it. But, then, what about the fighters' corners?

Said California referee Marty Denkin, "When a fighter after six, seven rounds has no ability to change the outcome, he's lost every chance, even a puncher's chance. The way we did it was we'd call the doctor up, to set the crowd up, prepare them for stopping the fight a little later."

Denkin, recovering from assorted heart procedures, spoke in the past tense because he didn't expect to referee again for a while, and because he contended that ring physicians, as a matter of policy, aren't being called into the ring as often as they used to be. Garcia issued a statement saying the commission was investigating the Burgos event, and in the meantime he wouldn't answer questions. (Through no fault of Garcia's, there's no actual commission, but one will be reconstituted when the state gets around to it. Long story.) I should point out that Denkin and Garcia were already feuding before this bout, but if Garcia wanted to give his side, all he had to do was return my calls.

An ex-Army medic with a keen eye for emergency procedures told me he was concerned that Burgos failed to receive oxygen, either in the ring or as he was being wheeled out. A ring physician from another state told me that's okay as long as he got oxygen in the ambulance. Another one said no, that's wrong. Who's right? If you didn't go to medical school either, your guess is as good as mine.

Burgos, we were told, was in surgery half an hour after leaving the arena, but it looked like people were taking an awful lot of time to get him diagnosed and out of

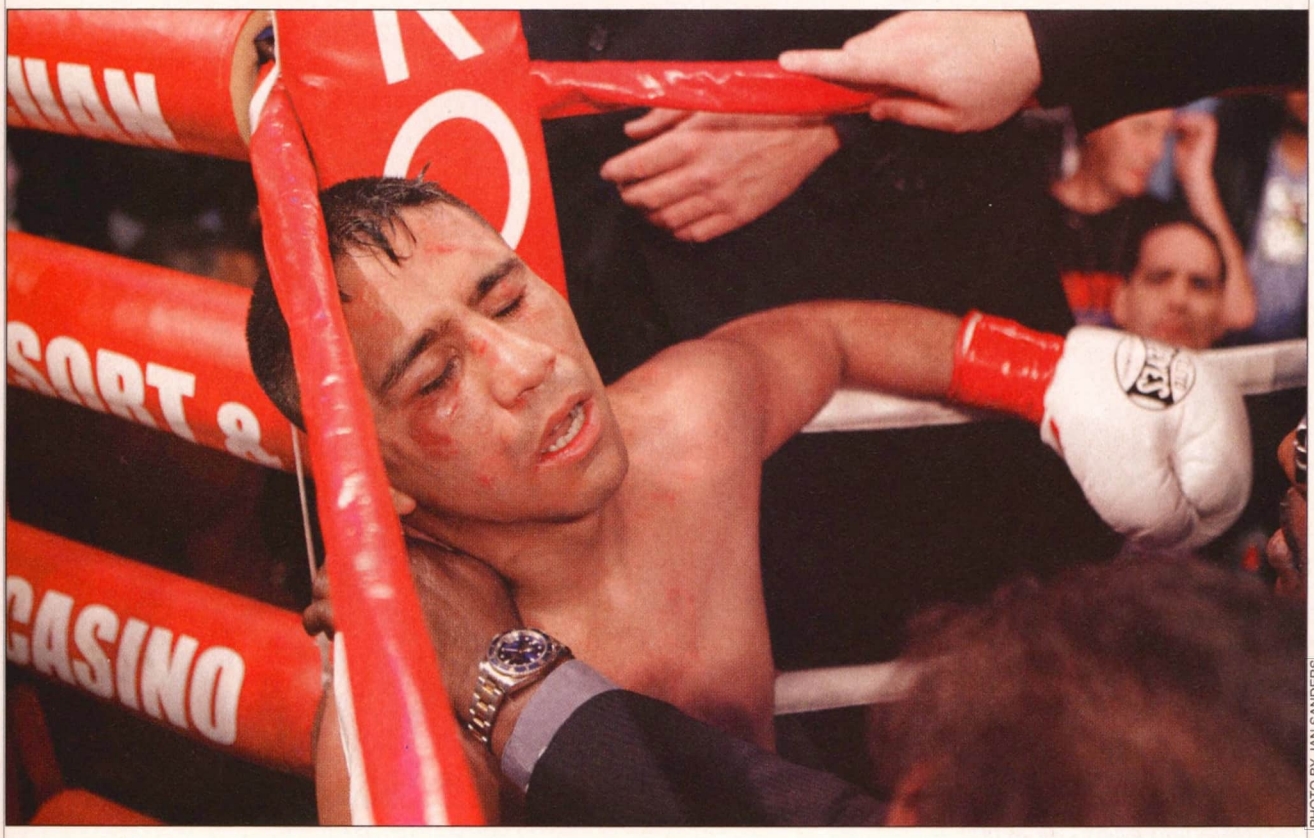


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Burgos was clearly in serious trouble after the fight was stopped

the ring. In fact, I guarantee you an Army medic would have worked quicker.

Although Burgos fell to the canvas several times in the course of the fight, Schorle declared only one knockdown. The others were ruled slips. But as the fight wore on, Burgos looked like an exhausted, beaten man who wasn't slipping, just falling down. There's plenty of blame to go around on this, but the chief screw-ups were from his cornermen, who got a close look at him between rounds. Darchinyan said so, his trainer, Billy Hussein, said so, and, for what it's worth, I say so.

Burgos' chief second, Roberto Sandoval, I was told, is like a father to Burgos. Well, they said trainer Eduardo Garcia was like a father to Fernando Vargas. But Garcia sat stuck to his seat like a barnacle while Vargas staggered down Queer Street taking pointless punishment from slug-master Felix Trinidad. Vargas was never again the same fighter.

Said Denkin, "If your fighter is doing his best and taking a beating, you should show some class, show some humanity."

In the main event the night Burgos got hurt, Denkin noted that when Israel Vazquez turned his back to Rafael Marquez in the fifth round, "Marquez charged him, so he turned around and fought back. But when a fighter turns around and puts both hands on his face, that fight is over. I know his corner thought Marquez was getting tired. But it was evident that nose was so tender, so bad. It was shattered, not just broken. Those splinters of bone can go anywhere. It's sad when a fighter has to stop his own fight. That's the corner's job"—Freddie Roach, in this case.

You could also make a good argument against Denkin's assessment. Vazquez won round six on all three judges' cards, and round seven on one card, after which he told Roach it was over. It's conceivable he could have caught Marquez and given us an ending something like the first match between Jose Luis Castillo and Diego Corrales, when Corrales got off the canvas twice in round 10 to stop Castillo, engraving the round as one of the greatest ever.

Vazquez, said ex-bantamweight champ Paulie Ayala, should have just waded in to kayo or be kayoed. "He's done it before. He still would have ended up with a broken nose, but maybe he'd still have his championship."

But Vazquez couldn't have fought much harder than he did, and said because he couldn't breathe through his nose he was taking more punishment. His face was so swollen an hour after he quit, it should have had an R rating.

Back to Burgos. Here are two suggestions that could prevent such situations:

1. Use the tool that's already there: Section 18733 or its equivalent in the various commission rulebooks.

2. When referees give prefight instructions to the fighter and his chief second in the locker room, that's a perfect time to review the trainer's options if his fighter is taking serious punishment in a hopeless situation. That's particularly appropriate when cornermen hail from places like Tijuana or Bangkok, where surrender is practically unknown. The truth is that violence is an integral component of the Sweet Science. Balancing it with safety isn't always easy, but in too many cases the excuses we hear later are weak attempts to mask poor judgment.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Paramedics carry Burgos from the ring

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Articulate Ayala would make an excellent broadcaster

ORACLE AYALA: It's no secret that fighters in lighter divisions come out on the short end of purse sizes, fame, and credit for their achievements. The curse even follows them into retirement. You rarely see an ex-fighter working as a commentator who fought at less than 147 pounds. But when I want an astute assessment, I call Paulie Ayala and always learn something. He's also quite articulate. Why don't networks use him? Two reasons: He fought his best fights as a bantam and junior feather, and I don't run a network.

NO LIE: Those cornered big shots who resign "to spend more time with their families" could learn from Paul Malinaggi, who freely conceded he wasn't ready for Ricky Hatton. The truth—what a concept!

MAGOO: To referee Jose H. Rivera, who allowed defenseless, spent Allan Green to continue getting whacked by Edison Miranda after his second knockdown in the 10th round. Why? So Green could possibly lose by decision instead of a stoppage? This is precisely the kind of deluded thinking that leads to a fighter leaving the ring on a gurney. ■

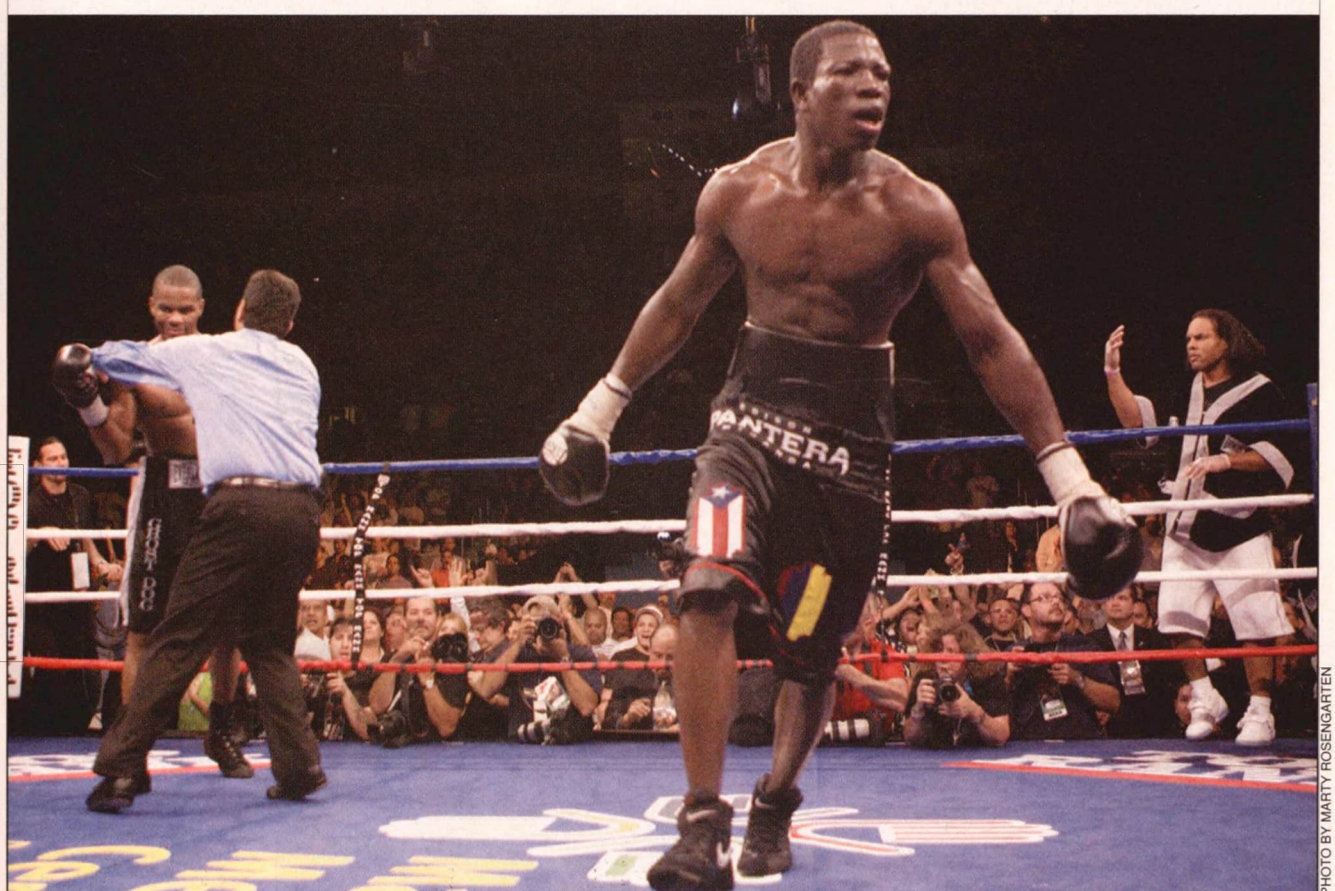


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Green's trainer, John David Jackson (on the apron with his had raised), looks like he agrees with Goldman

Camera Clicks

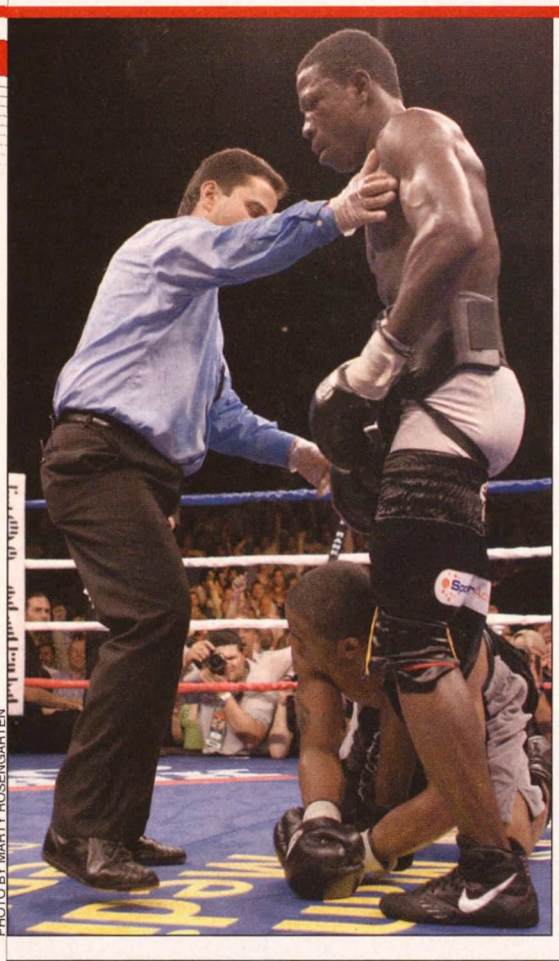


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

After his boxing career is over, Michael Katsidis can look forward to a fine career as a greeter at Caesars Palace. Or perhaps as a Hector Camacho impersonator in a revue. Either way, there's a job waiting for him in Las Vegas.

Just when you think you've heard of every rare disease and disorder there is, you learn about a new one, such as Edison Miranda's sad and unfortunate inability to distinguish between a referee and a urinal. Actually, opponent Allan Green yanked Miranda's trunks down as he fell to the canvas in the final seconds of their March bout—a brilliant tactic if he wanted to be able to land a shot to the groin and claim that it was above the beltline.

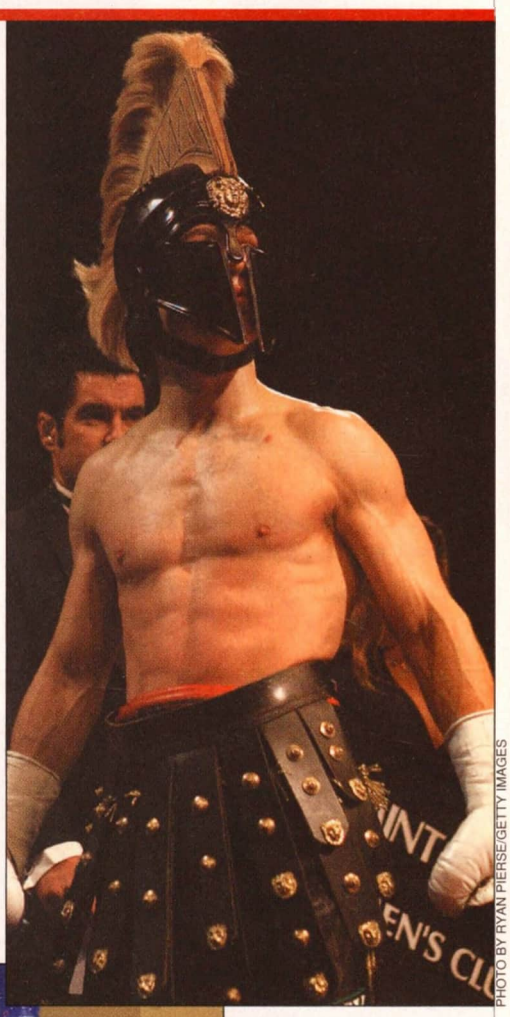


PHOTO BY RYAN PIERSE/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Wladimir Klitschko and Emanuel Steward play their favorite training camp game: "Guess Whether I'm Doing An Impression Of Myself From The Sanders Fight Or The Brewster Fight." Steward guessed Brewster on this one, but he was wrong; this particular pose is from the Sanders fight. The absence of Vaseline on Wladimir's legs should have been a dead giveaway.

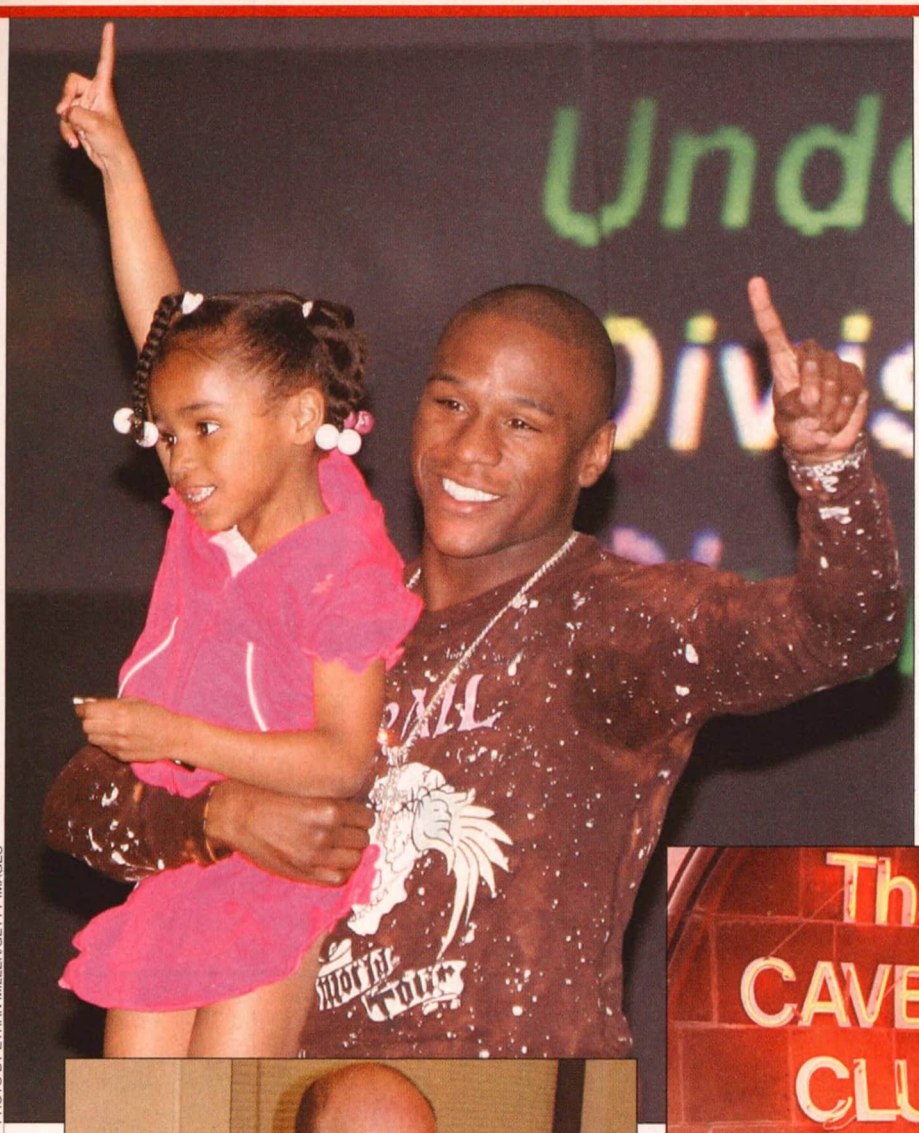


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

The rumors are true: Mayweather and Mayweather are back together! What's that you say? Floyd Mayweather and his daughter Ivanna never split up? Oops, our mistake. But little Ivanna might ditch her daddy if she notices that he's going out in public with those embarrassing underarm sweat rings. Who says he's not a little bit nervous about the De La Hoya fight?

Somehow, Paul, Souleymane, Derry, and Joe doesn't quite have the same ring as Paul, John, George, and Ringo, who made Liverpool's Cavern Club world famous more than 40 years ago, but you have to give this group of fighters credit for trying. The boxers are (left to right) Paul Smith, Souleymane Mbaye, Derry Matthews, and Joe McNally, all of whom fought on a show at the Olympia in Liverpool on March 10. Smith, Matthews, and McNally all won, but it was a "Hard Day's Night" for Mbaye, who needed some "Help!" from the judges to escape with a draw against Andreas Kotelnik.

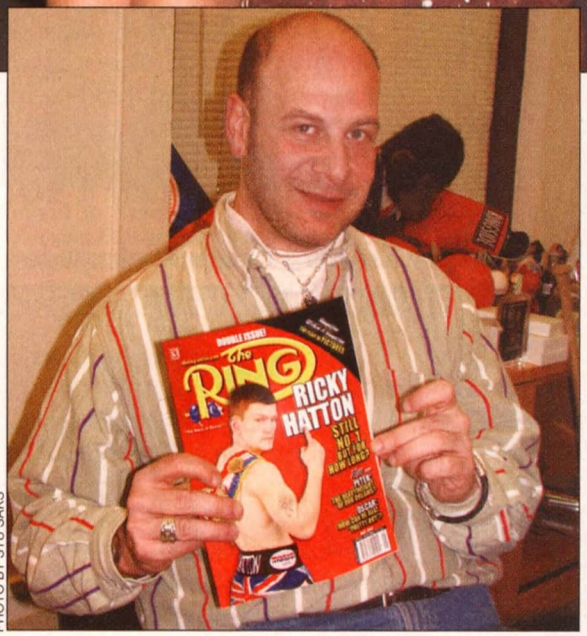


PHOTO BY STU SAKS

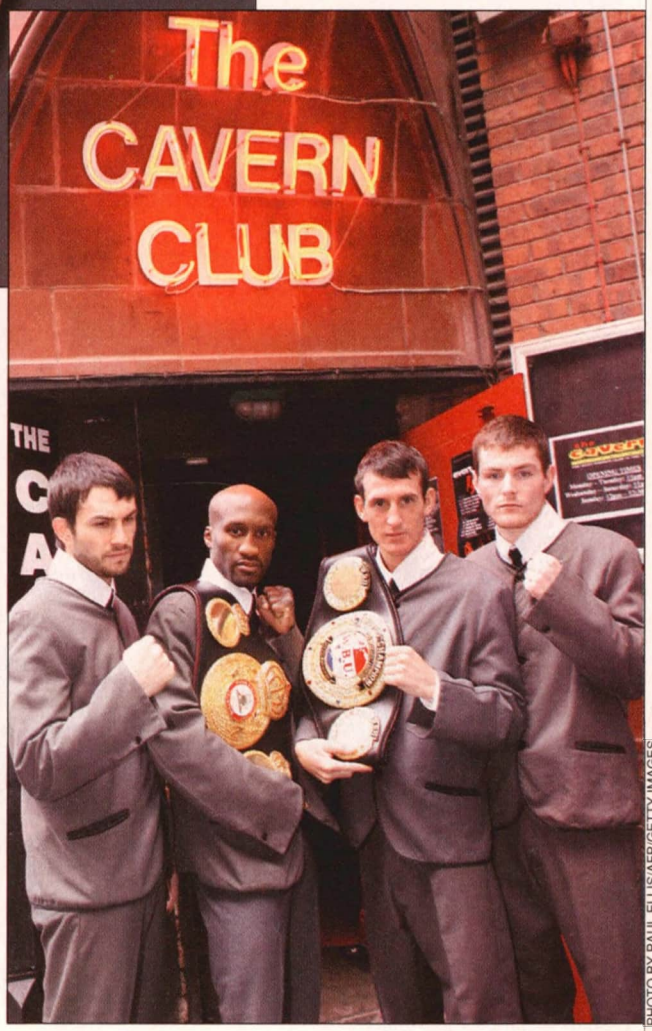


PHOTO BY PAUL ELLIS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Lou DiBella has always dreamed of being on the cover of a RING magazine, but for now he'd be content with getting one of his guys, Paul Malignaggi, a shot against the fighter on this particular cover, Ricky Hatton. Just as long as DiBella doesn't get Malignaggi a fight with the guy who was on the cover of the American version of this issue, as heavyweight Sam Peter would be a fairly tall task for "The Magic Man."

By Joe Santoliquito

James Kirkland Junior Middleweight

James Kirkland grew up in an area of Austin, Texas, known as the "2-4," named after the final two digits of the 78724 zip code he was from. Picture the worst urban blight—corner drug dealers, prostitution, high unemployment, homelessness—and you have the idea. Trouble was always lurking, hunting down new prey. It was inescapable.

Kirkland would often look at his surroundings and feel trapped, frustrated, and vulnerable. Winter mornings were particularly vicious, as the cold crept through the woodwork of his tiny apartment, with little or no money to fend it off. Then there were the times he didn't have a home at all, when he, his two brothers, and his mother resorted to living in abandoned buildings. It all spawned a rage in Kirkland so intense that fans today can feel it burn right through the TV screen during his televised fights.

What the 5'9" southpaw junior middleweight has been able to do is channel that anger into a positive, fan-friendly, attacking style that's forged an 18-0 (16) record. Kirkland, 22, never seems to stop throwing punches. He wants to knock out his opponents from the first punch he throws.

It's earned him some attention on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* and Showtime's *ShoBox* series.

"I saw Kirkland fight three or four times live before he came on *ShoBox*, and I couldn't wait to get him on the air," Showtime ringside analyst Steve Farhood said. "The guy is seething when he gets into the ring; he's an angry young man. Very, very few fighters use anger as a positive. That's because anger can zap you. But Roberto Duran used anger, as did Mike Tyson and Fernando Vargas. They were able to use their anger because they used proper technique. Knowing when to throw and where to throw punches, you're less likely to get fatigued. Kirkland fights pissed off. He possesses this rare combination of anger and confidence."

Pro Record

2001		
Aug. 25	Maurice Chalmers, San Antonio, TX	KO 3
Oct. 26	Juan Rodriguez, Austin, TX	KO 1
Dec. 9	Maurice Chalmers, Austin	KO 3
2002		
July 13	Jose Luis Rodrigues, Las Vegas, NV	KO 1
Sept. 12	Rashaan Blackburn, Washington, D.C.	KO 3
Oct. 11	Edgar Pedraza, San Antonio	W 4
2003		
Jan. 31	Juan Carlos Aranday, San Antonio	KO 3
March 15	Rodney Tappin, Dallas, TX	W 4
May 23	Sergio Soto, Concho, OK	KO 3
Aug. 22	Martinus Clay, Choctaw, MS	KO 1
Nov. 6	Russell Jordan, Washington, D.C.	KO 1
2006		
April 21	Manny Castillo, Mt. Pleasant, SC	KO 2
May 5	David Estrada, Concho	KO 3
June 3	Ray Cuningham, Las Vegas, NV	KO 1
July 28	Alexis Divison, Las Vegas	KO 3
Oct. 6	Sherwin Davis, Santa Ynez, CA	KO 2
Dec. 1	David Toribio, Santa Ynez	KO 4
2007		
Feb. 2	Billy Lyell, Santa Ynez	KO 8

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
18	18	0	0	16

Kirkland also has a managerial infrastructure that could spell big things in the next two years. Cameron Dunkin and Michael Miller, a San Antonio, Texas-based attorney who's managed Jesse James Leija and Golden Johnson, co-manage Kirkland. Gary Shaw is Kirkland's promoter; Pops Billingsley and Ann Wolfe, one of the best female fighters in the world, train him.

The only one who could stop Kirkland from succeeding could be Kirkland himself.

He did over a year in prison for robbery—after he built a professional record of 11-0, fighting under a contract he signed with Duva Boxing when he was 17. But the Duvas dropped him when Kirkland was found guilty of robbing a man coming out of a convenience store in 2003. Eventually, the money woes and the incessant miasma of the 2-4 swallowed him. It pained

(Continued on Page 122)

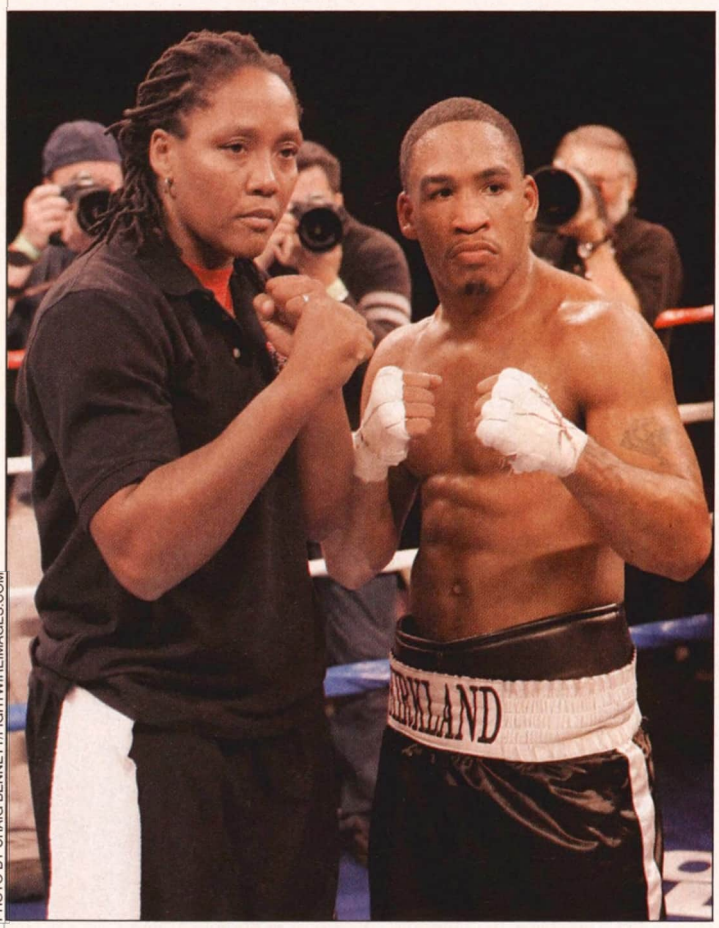


PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIREIMAGES.COM

Kirkland with trainer Ann Wolfe

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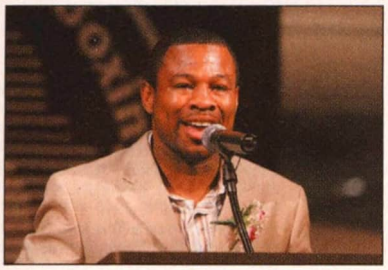
BANQUET OF CHAMPIONS



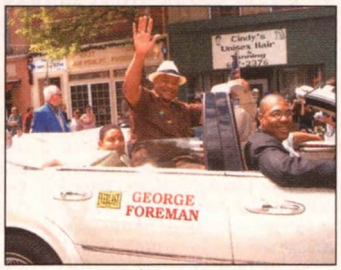
Reminiscing . . . "Sugar" Shane Mosley shares fight stories with banquet crowd.

FIST CASTING

Everlasting . . . Fist cast by Diego Corrales.

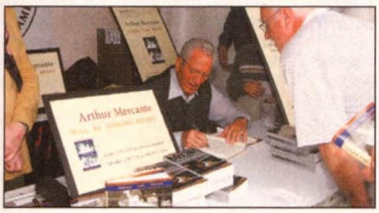
PARADE OF CHAMPIONS

Marvelous . . . Marvin Hagler waves to fans.



Hooray . . . George Foreman enjoys fans along parade route.

BOOK SIGNINGS



Hall of Fame referee Arthur Mercante signs his autobiography for the fans.

MUSEUM GROUNDS

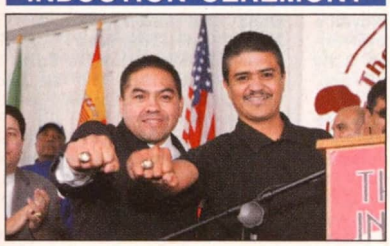
Autographs . . . "Sweet Pea" Pernell Whitaker spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

5K RACE, FUN RUN

Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

INDUCTION CEREMONY



A Moment in Time . . . "Chiquita" Gonzalez and Michael Carbajal proudly show their Hall of Fame rings.

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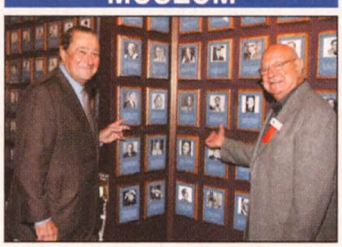
GOLF TOURNAMENT

Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

COCKTAIL PARTY

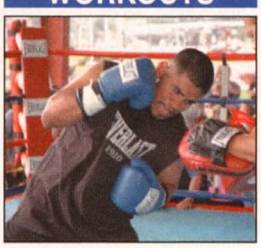
Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM



Bob Arum and Angelo Dundee point to their plaques on the Hall of Fame Wall.

WORKOUTS



Juan Diaz works the bag mitts during daily public workouts.

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Oct. 1984: The Beast From The East: John Mugabi Strikes Terror Into The Hearts Of Men. Plus: Olympics, Bill Costello, Davey Moore, Wilfred Benitez, King's heavyweights.

Feb. 1985: Showdown: Page Clobbers Coetzee For WBA Title. Plus: Larry Holmes, lightweights, Cooney-Chaplin, McCallum-Minchillo.

March 1985: Thomas Hearns—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Annual ratings, Fight, Upset, Round, Comeback, and Prospect of the Year.

May 1985: The Rematch In Reno: Bramble-Mancini Color Action. Plus: Donald Curry, Aaron Pryor, McGuigan-LaPorte.

June 1985: Holmes' Last Hurrah? Holmes-Bey Color Action. Plus: Holmes vs. all-time greats, Paul-Arroyo, 1901.

Aug. 1985: Seven Elected To The Ring Hall Of Fame (Jose Napoles, Jake LaMotta, Panama Al Brown, Manuel Ortiz, Young Stribling, Thomas Jackling, Lord Lonsdale). Plus: Spinks-Holmes preview, Barry McGuigan.

Oct. 1985: The "Macho Man" Rides Again. Plus: Jeff Fenech, Berbick-Green, John E. Garcia, Dwight Muhammad Qawi, McCallum-Braxton.

Nov. 1985: Will Hagler Feast On The Beast? Plus: Hagler-Mugabi & Hearns-Shuler previews, Lonnie Smith, Pintor-Meza, Chuck Hull, Benitez-Moley.

Dec. 1985: Michael Spinks: Against All Odds. Plus: Curry-McCrory preview, McGuigan-Taylor, Alexis Arguello, Michael Olajide, Chavez-Pratchett.

Jan. 1986: In Search Of A Heavyweight Champion. Plus: Azumah Nelson, Arguello-Jefferson, Olympic update, Chicago boxing.

May 1986: Hagler vs. Mugabi: Marvelous Marvin Tames The Beast. Plus: Marvin Johnson, McGuigan-Cabrera, Bramble-Crawley, Tyson-Ferguson, 10 worst decisions.

June 1986: Barry's Back In The USA: McGuigan Breathes A Breath Of Fresh Air Into American Fight Scene. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Robbie Sims, Qawi-Holyfield preview, Berbick-Thomas, Bruno-Coetzee.

Aug. 1986: Is Sugar Ray Still Sweet? Plus: Lloyd Honeyghan, Tyson-Green, Cooney-Gregg, Hall of Fame (Eder Jofre, Benny Lynch, Bud Taylor, Sam McVey, Nat Langham, John Chambers), Bernardo Pinango.

Sept. 1986: Gerry Cooney vs. Mike Tyson: Who Would Win? Plus: Cruz-McGuigan, Hearns-Medal, Tyson-Gross, Sims-Duran.

Dec. 1986: The Weekend That Shook The Boxing World. Rosario-Bramble & Honeyghan-Curry. Plus: Butch Lewis interview, Buster Drayton, Hector Camacho, Jake LaMotta.

June 1987: Vinny Paz: Phenom Or Phony? Plus: Tyson-Bonecrusher, Mark Breland, Brian Mitchell, Evander Holyfield, Czyz-Edwards, Olajide-Lee, Curry-Montgomery.

July 1987: Spinks-Cooney: The Fight That Refused To Die. Plus: The new Ring ratings, Terry Marsh, George Foreman's return, Khaosai Galaxy, Hearns-Andries, Whitaker-Mayweather.

Sept. 1987: Michael Olajide: The Look Of The Future? Plus: Tyson-Thomas, Jeff Fenech, middleweight muddle, Tsuyoshi Hamada, Juan Roldan, Harold Knight.

Dec. 1987: Spinks & Lewis: Boxing's Beastie Boys. Plus: Starling-Breland, Ramzi Hassan, Honeyghan-Hatcher, Holyfield-Ocasio.

Jan. 1988: Darrin Van Horn—Million Dollar Baby? Plus: Evander Holyfield, Hill-Stewart, Juan Coggi, great hookers, AIDS.

Feb. 1988: Gold Outshines Glitter: Tate Tops Olajide. Plus: Tyson-Biggs, Kalambay-Barkley, Hearns-Roldan, fights we'd like to see.

March 1988: Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns: "Now I Own History." Plus: Lockridge & Mayweather, Tony Burton, Julio Cesar Chavez, blood.

April 1988: Evander Holyfield: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Special year-end awards, Holyfield-Qawi II, Foreman-Sekorski, Hill-Angulo.

May 1988: George Foreman: "I Can Beat Tyson." Plus: Tyson-Holmes, Jesse Benavides, Showtime, no-knockout artists.

Sept. 1988: Sugar Ray: Here He Comes Again! Plus: Andries-Czyz, Kid Chocolate, Don Dunphy, Don Lalonde.

Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory? Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!" Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

Jan. 1989: Meldrick Taylor: Philly Phenom. Plus: Marvin Hagler, Alex Wallau, Taylor-McGirt, Olympic results.

Feb. 1989: Julio Cesar Chavez. Plus: Chavez-Ramirez, all-time lightweight ratings, Louie Espinoza, Simon Brown, Roger Mayweather.

March 1989: Hearns Next For Sugar Ray? Plus: Leonard-Lalonde, Prince Charles Williams, Hearns-Kinchen, Nunn-Roldan, Hines-Hilton.

May 1989: The Best Of '88. Plus: Year-end awards, Evander Holyfield, Pryor-Morales, Fenech-Navarro.

Feb. 1990: Mike Tyson: Riddick Bowe & Ray Mercer Take Aim. Plus: Bobby Czyz, Gerry Cooney, Chuck Wepner, Antonio Esparragoza, Roman-Laciar.

March 1990: The '80s—Great Fights, Great Fighters (color). Plus: Jeff Harding, Evander Holyfield, Pete Rademacher, Sharkey-McCoy.

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May 1990: Big George Talks Tough: "Tyson Won't Be That Difficult!" Plus: Ed Hopson, Russian fighters, grudge wars, Archie Moore, Kid Berg, Marcel Cerdan, Chavez-Cortes.

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Feb. 1991: Boxing On TV—Now You'll Pay! Plus: Ismael Laguna, Tommy Morrison in *Rocky V*, Reggie Tuur, Chiquita Gonzalez, Harold Green, Joe Louis.

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July 1992: Does Larry Holmes Deserve A Title Shot? Plus: Nelson-Fenech II, Tracy Patterson, Kelley-Dorsey, fat fighters, Buchanan-Camacho, Holmes-Ali (color).

Aug. 1992: Holyfield-Holmes Prefight. Holmes: "I See Me Takin' Holyfield Outta There." Plus: Iran Barkley, Herbie Hide, George Foreman, Tex Cobb, Carnival of Champions, Harry Greb, Haugen-Mancini, Oscar De La Hoya, Gene Tunney (color).

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May 1993: Oscar De La Hoya's Sprint To The Title: Is He Good Enough *Now?* Plus: Carbajal-Gonzalez preview, Lennox Lewis, The Ring Poll, Freddie Pendleton.

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Nov. 1996: Pole-Axed! Low Blows, Sinking Bowe, Ugly Show. Plus: Bowe-Golota I, Blinky Palermo, exciting fighters, Winky Wright, Joe Brown.

June 1997 (Special Collector's Issue): Holyfield-Tyson II: What It Means For Now ... And Forever. Plus: Holyfield-Tyson fight poster, Naseem Hamed, computer unification, Sayers-Heenan, state of the game.

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Aug. 2002: Lewis vs. Tyson: Who Will Win ... And What Happens Next. Plus: Michael Moorer, Jeff Fenech, Charley Parham, Rafael & Juan Manuel Marquez.

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April 2004: Antonio Tarver: "It's Not About Roy Jones Anymore." Also: Pacquiao-Barrera, Floyd Mayweather, all punch/no chin, Rinty Monaghan.

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Fall 2004: Trinidad vs. Mayorga: Comeback Or Calamity. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Marco Antonio Barrera, Juan Diaz, Jimmy Clabby.

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Spring 2005—Svelter Welter: Moving To 147 Will Tip The Scale In Oscar's Favor. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Glen Johnson, Andre Ward, Johnny Persol.

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Fall 2005: Jeff "Left Hook" Lacy: Bringing Excitement Back To The Super Middles. Plus: Fernando Vargas, Rahman-Klitschko, Taylor-Hopkins, boxing pitchmen.

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Now That Marquez Has Beaten Barrera...

Will Politics Rob Us Of A Dream Rematch With Pac-Man?

PHOTOS BY SUMIO YAMADA

By Ivan Goldman

Juan Manuel Marquez' career could never be likened to the trajectory of a rocket. It's been more like a stealth fighter—visible to the naked eye but essentially off the radar. Although experts have considered him one of the very best fighters around for years, experts can't sell out stadiums.

"This guy has been kept purposely out of the loop by possible opponents," said Fox commentator Rich Marotta, a long-time champion of Marquez' cause. "I congratulate Marco Antonio Barrera for giving him, at this late stage, this opportunity."

After years of semi-obscurity, Marquez took a huge step toward stardom when he outfought faded icon Barrera (below), winning a unanimous 12-round decision and the WBC 130-pound strap (opposite page).

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Although the most logical next fight for Marquez would be a rematch against Manny Pacquiao, with whom he fought a thrilling draw in 2004, a promotional war over Pac-Man's services could rob the sport of this potential superfight.

Marquez, a well-schooled, tough, quick junior lightweight, is known as a particularly fierce and deadly counter-puncher, all of which he proved in 12 action-packed rounds against Mexican icon Barrera in Las Vegas.

The 8,127 fans at the Mandalay Bay arena, on March 17, saw two experts at work, two of the best fighters around in any weight class. Exchanges were fierce, quick, and so fast they weren't easy to follow. Barrera tends to get in great fights, giving his opponents a unique opportunity to make history. Marquez made the most of it. Ultimately, his execution was more polished and effective. He not only defeated Barrera, he also stood toe-to-toe with him in a way that had to satisfy even the most demanding Mexican fans.

If life were fair, the public would now recognize Marquez, who correctly got the nod from all three judges, as the skilled, important fighter that he is. But proving that life can be both unfair and difficult at the same time, his name recognition among casual fans still falls only slightly above the "barely known" category.

For a fighter of his caliber, Marquez hasn't had a whole lot of TV exposure, and his triumph over one of the greatest fighters of this era, because it was on pay-per-view, didn't exactly pull in a Super Bowl-sized viewing audience. Although HBO's replay the next week helped, both shows hit the media circuit smack dab in the middle of NCAA March basketball madness, when many sports fans devoted their evenings to the tournament. It seemed the whole world was conspiring to keep the light of Marquez beneath a bushel.

The best move for him now, both career-wise and financially, would be to secure a showdown against crowd-pleasing, hammer-fisted Manny Pacquiao, who tried once to take out Juan Manuel but had to settle for a bruising draw. But business and legal complications make that rematch a difficult quest. Within minutes after Michael Buffer announced the decision, the wheels were turning for a rematch with Barrera, not Pacquiao. HBO even reserved a September date on its schedule.

If his promoter, Golden Boy, thought Marquez deserved credit for his victory, that sentiment was not terribly apparent at the postfight press conference. Marquez had beaten one of Golden Boy's biggest stars, who also happened to be a partner in the company. Juan Manuel, who thanked Barrera for giving him the opportunity to fight him, went with the flow and agreed that Barrera deserved a rematch. If Barrera doesn't want one, he said, he'd like to fight Pacquiao. But before he and his manager-trainer, Nacho Beristain, got a chance to expand on that thought, RING light heavyweight champion Bernard Hopkins grabbed the microphone, said Marquez must be tired, blah, blah, blah, and killed proceedings as though he were, well, an executioner.

Hopkins, also a Golden Boy partner, has never been an easy man to catch clean in the ring, and when he puts on a suit and works as a promoter, those skills are transferable. His firm was in the midst of an all-out business war with Bob Arum's Top Rank, the promoter of Pacquiao's next scheduled fight, an April 14 match against undefeated Jorge Solis in San Antonio, Texas.

Golden Boy contends that it, not

Although both men are the same age, Marquez has not been in so many give-and-take wars, which gave him an edge, especially during the second half of the fight. Even so, many rounds were close and both fighters absorbed punishment.

Top Rank, has the legal right to promote the Philippines dynamo. A battle was working its way through the courts, and in the meantime, no one from Golden Boy appeared eager to utter the names Pacquiao and Marquez in the same sentence. Putting them together in the ring would require negotiating with a company that Golden Boy claims has no right to represent Pacquiao.

The press conference was far more devoted to the loser than the winner. Hopkins was content to let Barrera supporters ask questions that were really expressions of their contention that Marquez' victory was unjust. When Marotta and the correspondent from this magazine congratulated Marquez for his achievement and asked him about the keys to his victory, that's when Hopkins jumped in and closed shop.

"Pacquiao is the natural next opponent for Marquez," said Norman Horton, a long-time boxing publicist who's employed by neither Top Rank nor Golden Boy. "There's no question about it. I would say Pac-Man is the big, big little guy" who could attract the most money to an event. "But let's face it. Golden Boy and Arum just don't like each other."

True enough. But Arum, reached by phone, said, "If Pacquiao comes through this fight [against Solis], a fight between him and Marquez would be a natural. Of course [Golden Boy] will push for a match with Barrera instead. That way they can keep it all in-house.

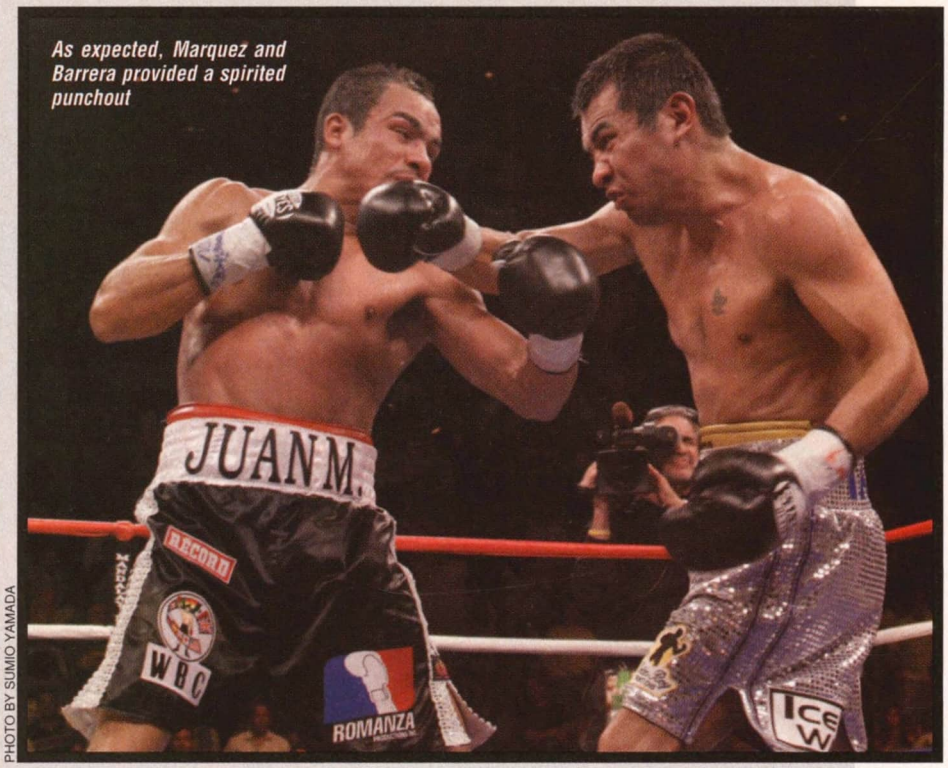
"Look, we offered Barrera and Golden Boy $3-million plus an upside to fight Pacquiao again. They turned it down and fought Marquez instead. Barrera will be lucky if he comes away with half the money."

Golden Boy Chief Executive Richard Schaefer, who normally returns calls, was unavailable for comment. But at the postfight press conference, if the word "Pacquiao" ever passed his lips, this correspondent didn't hear it.

Said Marotta, "If I had my druthers, I would much rather see Juan Manuel fight Pacquiao. But I don't know if it's possible."

Said Arum: "All the difficulty in making the deal is coming from one side. Look, I've been in boxing now for 41 years. The other guy is a Swiss banker." The reference to Schaefer (a former Swiss banker) was not meant as flattery.

Said Marotta: "I really was upset by that post-fight press conference. What



As expected, Marquez and Barrera provided a spirited punchout

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Anatomy of a Tough Fight

Marco Antonio Barrera came in slightly favored, and the casino offered 3-1 odds the fight would go the distance. Everyone understood that, for a host of good reasons, neither fighter was likely to stop the other. From the very beginning both men put leverage on just about every shot. Jabs were sharp, combinations and counterpunching were the rule. When they got close, Barrera's trademark hook to the liver found its mark. He looked faster in the early rounds. But by round three, Juan Manuel Marquez was slipping punches more easily.

Round four ended with a furious exchange along the ropes, but Marquez got the better of it. From then on, the 10-second warning was a signal for them both to explode.

By round five, Marquez was going forward a little more than Barrera, but his face was swelling up. Round seven was pivotal. In the middle of a big exchange, a solid right from Marquez hurt Barrera, who was driven back to the ropes. But he refused to go down, recovered his balance, and now Marquez looked punched out. A short, Joe Louis-like right from Barrera put Marquez down, with both knees and both gloves touching canvas. Referee Jay Nady hesitated while Barrera stood over Marquez, measuring him and finally landing a vicious shot to the back of the head. Nady called it a slip and took a point from Barrera. Round seven was excellent evidence in favor of using instant replay reviews in boxing.

By round eight, Marquez was back in the groove, usually getting a little more done. But two judges and THE RING scored round nine for Barrera. Trainer Nacho Beristain did great work on both of Marquez' eyes, but in round 12, blood flowed freely from the right eye. In that round Barrera started out looking fresher, but in a huge exchange at the 10-second warning, he was staggered.

—I.G.

were we hearing? A bad decision, the judges were bad, Mandalay Bay was bad. But the fact is, the decision wasn't even debatable. And there was no disgrace in Barrera's loss. He'd just participated in a great fight."

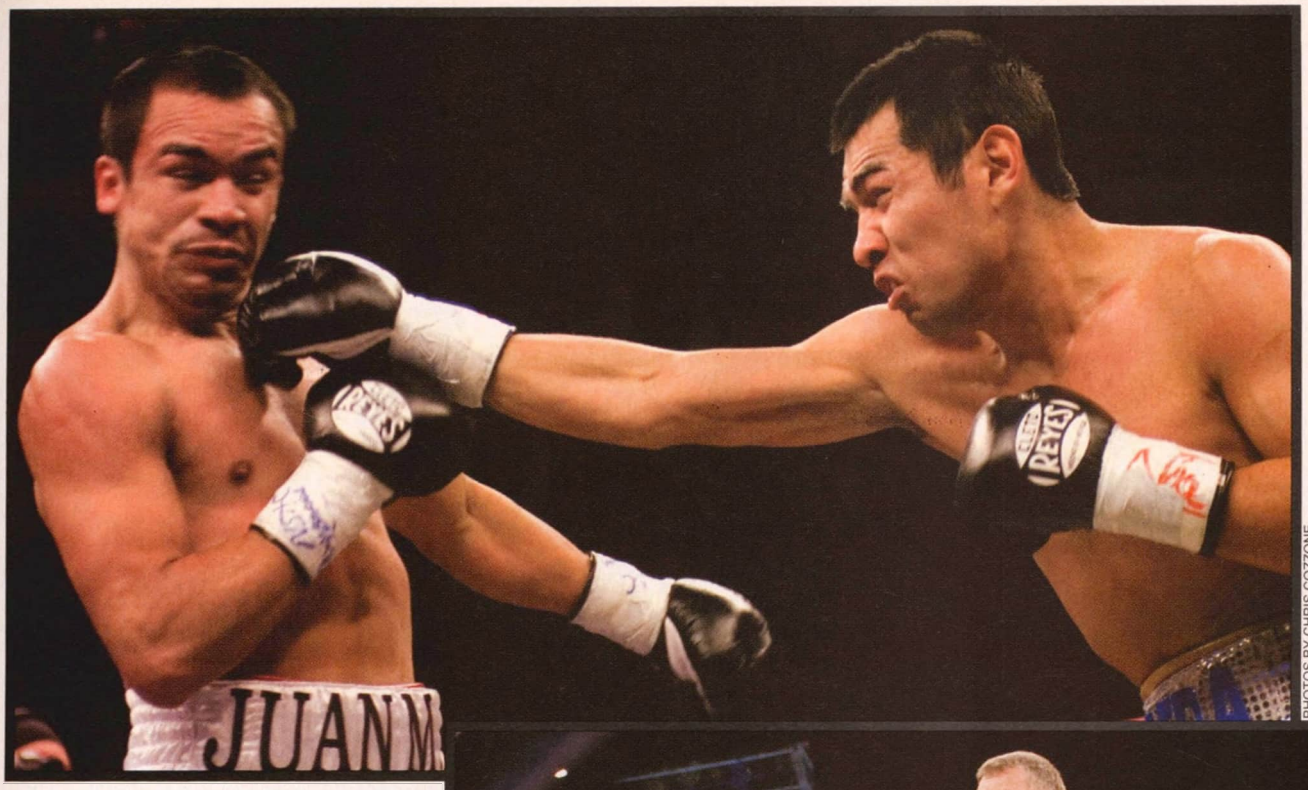
One must concede, however, that on the boxing side of the equation, a Marquez fight with Pac-Man would be no walk in the park. The Filipino southpaw sensation is number two on THE RING's list of best fighters pound-for-pound (behind Floyd Mayweather). Now training with Freddie Roach, he's more effective than he was against Marquez three years earlier. In addition to his lightning straight left, he employs a fierce right hook, a jab that has to hurt, and improved defense. His conditioning has been as splendid as ever.

The Barrera that Pacquiao and Marquez defeated didn't look quite as strong as the Barrera of former years. It wasn't clear whether he'd ever fight again. He'll discuss that with his family, he said, but in most such cases, the safe bet is that the fighter will keep fighting.

Barrera is an old 33-year-old fighter. He turned pro at age 15 and fought countless wars building his record of 63-5 (42). It shocks some fans to learn Marquez, 47-3-1 (35), is actually five months older, turning 34 in August. Both are from Mexico City, but have fought mostly in the U.S.

Marquez was elated that his triumph came precisely two weeks after his younger brother, Rafael, stopped Israel Vazquez in Carson, California, winning THE RING junior featherweight title. "It's like they had me and my brother locked up," he said. The brothers needed "fights like these" to prove themselves, he added.

Marquez freely admitted that although referee Jay Nady didn't rule it a knockdown, he hit the canvas in round seven as the result of a Barrera right hand. But Barrera, he pointed out, shouldn't have punched him while he was down. (Nady deducted a point for the foul.) "No athlete should do that



PHOTOS BY CHRIS COZZONE

After being rocked early in the seventh round, Barrera rallied back (above) and floored Marquez with a right to the jaw. But not only did referee Jay Nady miss the knockdown punch and call it a slip, Barrera was also penalized a point for hitting his opponent while Marquez was down (right).

to another athlete," Marquez said.

Said Barrera: "I know in my heart I won the fight." He joked that perhaps the three judges were soccer judges. As for the foul, he said a warrior fights and "the referee didn't do his job" to quickly separate the fighters.

HBO's Harold Lederman scored the fight 114-113 for Barrera, which was like pouring gasoline on a small flame of controversy. Two earlier fights on the card were scored so abominably by the judges that observers were in no mood to trust official scores. "As far as I'm concerned, there is no controversy," said Horton, who, scoring it off TV, had it comfortably for Marquez. "Some guys can't accept defeat."

Judges Paul Smith and Patricia Morse-Jarman scored it 116-111, and Doug Tucker had it 118-109. Had Nady seen the knockdown and Barrera not committed the foul, making round seven 10-8 in favor of Barrera, instead of 10-8 for Marquez, Marquez still would have won on all three cards. THE RING scored it 115-113, also for Marquez.

Marotta, though disappointed by the postfight atmosphere, was nevertheless pleased. "I'm just happy to see Marquez not turn out to be one of these kids with a world of potential who didn't get the opportunity to fulfill it."

No matter how many formidable opponents they take on, fighters can never get around to everyone because young contenders are always moving into the picture. But in this case, a Marquez-Pacquiao rematch makes terrific sense. Because Pac-Man ducks no man, the only hurdle appears to be the men in suits. ■

Ivan Goldman is THE RING's West Coast correspondent.

JUNIOR FEATHER CHAMPION

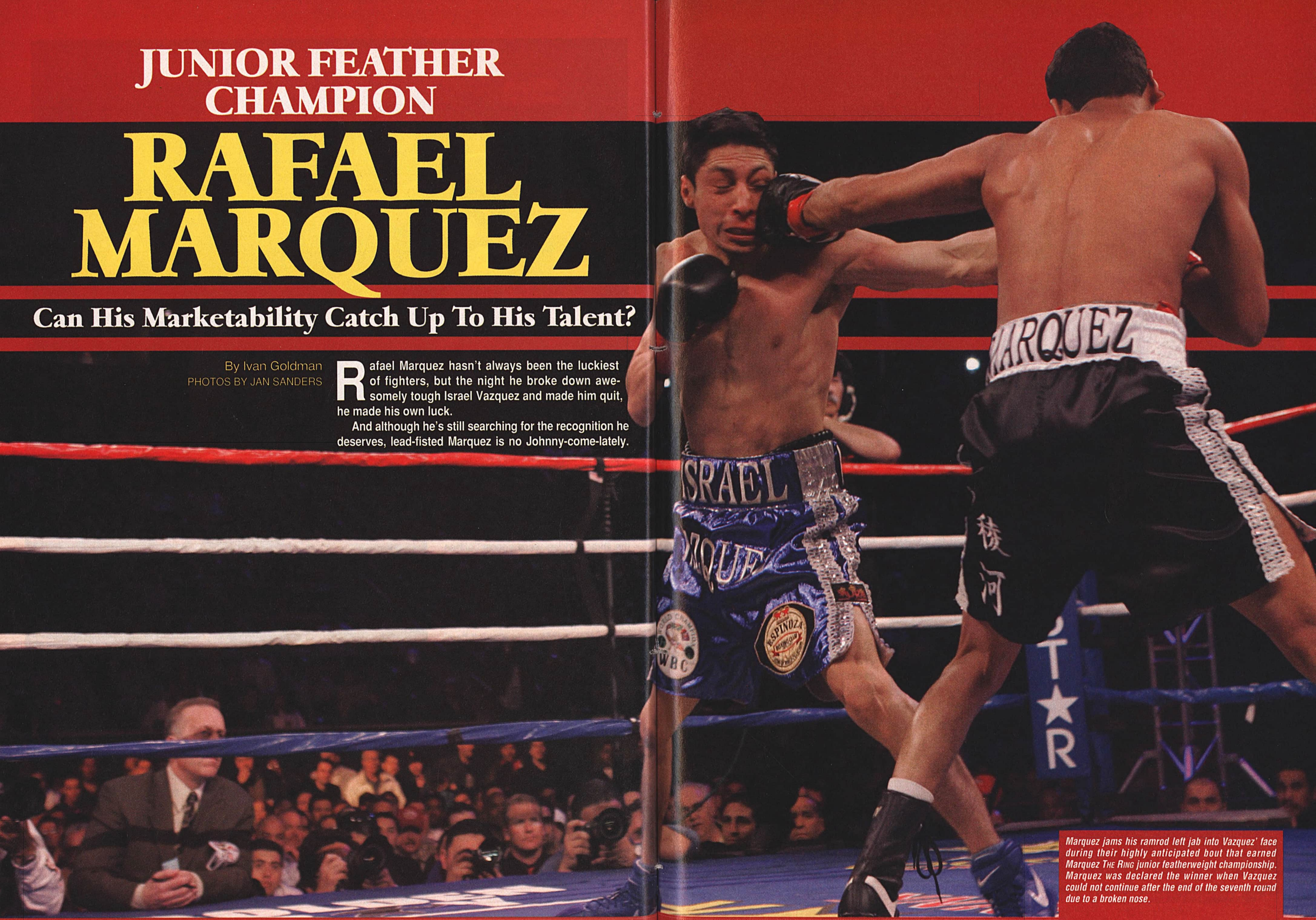
RAFAEL MARQUEZ

Can His Marketability Catch Up To His Talent?

By Ivan Goldman
PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS

Rafael Marquez hasn't always been the luckiest of fighters, but the night he broke down awesomely tough Israel Vazquez and made him quit, he made his own luck.

And although he's still searching for the recognition he deserves, lead-fisted Marquez is no Johnny-come-lately.



Marquez jams his ramrod left jab into Vazquez' face during their highly anticipated bout that earned Marquez THE RING junior featherweight championship. Marquez was declared the winner when Vazquez could not continue after the end of the seventh round due to a broken nose.

Although the spirited encounter featured plenty of two-way action, Marquez' punches seemed harder and inflicted far more physical damage. Many believe Marquez is, pound-for-pound, the hardest puncher in the sport.

He turned 32 three weeks after lifting THE RING junior featherweight championship from Vazquez in a nearly flawless boxer-puncher performance televised by Showtime.

Marquez had been rated number seven pound-for-pound by THE RING going in, so it's not as though his ring brilliance went totally unnoticed. In fact, many experts already considered him, pound-for-pound, the hardest puncher in the sport. But it's never easy for fighters in the smaller weight classes to become well-known in the wider world, particularly when, like Marquez, they've been saddled with a string of unlucky breaks, beginning in 1995 when he inadvertently kicked off his pro career.

Marquez had been matched against world-class Victor Rabanales in what he and his team believed was an exhibition match. But officials in Campeche, Mexico, counted it as a regulation bout, sticking Marquez with an eighth-round kayo loss and a starting record of 0-1. Determined, Marquez put the mix-up behind him and pushed ahead, honing his skills all the while. But as he compiled his puncher's record of 37-3 (33), Rafael was overshadowed by big brother Juan Manuel Marquez, competing several pounds up the scale.

The brothers, trained by prickly, demanding Nacho Beristain, can both call on a deep reservoir of talent. Beristain, who's been called Mexico's Eddie Futch, put them through a superb conditioning regimen and taught them boxing savvy from the ground up. But in his role as manager, Beristain's genius is less apparent. After Juan Manuel fought to a rousing draw with rising star Manny Pacquiao and Beristain refused to accept a rematch, infuriating promoter Bob Arum, which ultimately concluded with their promotional relationship being severed. Rafael, double-teamed by his brother's taller shadow and the Arum-Beristain infighting, was once again hurt by peripheral circumstances that had nothing to do with his abilities or accomplishments.

When number-one rated bantamweight Rafael signed to move up four pounds and challenge Vazquez, it was no surprise that the bout between the two Mexican fighters landed in Southern California. Mexico produces excellent fighters but relatively mediocre purses. Also, the L.A. area is filled with Hispanic fans that appreciate smaller fighters. They, along with other hardcore fight fans, understood just how great a match it promised to be.

Vazquez, 41-4 (31), had stopped Jorge Eliecer Julio, Jose Luis Valbuena, Ivan Hernandez, and Oscar Larios, after losing their first match. But he gained even more respect when he got off the canvas twice to stop Jhonny Gonzalez in one of the best fights of 2006.

Unfortunately, few residents of L.A. were even aware the Marquez-Vazquez card existed. The morning of the contest, the *Los Angeles Times,* the region's principal English-language daily, ran only a small preview article with no photos. Above it was a story three times as long accompanied by a three-column photo. It previewed a mixed-martial arts contest the same night in Columbus, Ohio. Columbus is roughly 2,250 miles from Los Angeles. Marquez and Vazquez fought at a

Although Marquez blocked this right from Vazquez with his glove, there was so much power behind it, he still got his face squashed by his own glove. Even though he was the defending champion, Vazquez entered the bout as the underdog.

venue 13 miles south of the *Times*' main office and featured a fighter who lives in the Los Angeles area—transplanted Mexico City native Vazquez.

Set in the outdoor Home Depot Center in Carson, California, during Southern California's rain season (it didn't rain), the card drew what had to be a disappointing crowd of 5,155 fans, even though tickets were priced at a reasonable $25 to $200.

Fans got an action-packed contest while it lasted. The two warriors traded fierce combinations from the very first round, when heavy-fisted Marquez broke Vazquez' nose. But Vazquez, 29, rallied in round three, knocking Marquez to the canvas with a left hook and making it anybody's fight.

Marquez took over again, but particularly in rounds six and seven, Vazquez' punishing bodywork kept him in the fight. Then, at the end of the seventh, Vazquez' chief trainer, Freddie

Referee Raul Caiz Jr. administers a mandatory eight-count to Marquez after Vazquez floored him in the third round with a left hook. It was the first time in his career that Marquez had been knocked down.

Roach, unexpectedly surrendered, advising referee Raul Caiz Jr. that his fighter couldn't breathe through his pulverized nose.

Judges Dave Moretti and Pat Russell scored it 67-65 through seven rounds. Jack Reiss saw it 66-66, as did THE RING. A significant factor was Marquez' jackhammer jab. Vazquez had a terrible time trying to slip or counter it and couldn't absorb the kind of punishment it dealt him round after round, while also setting up powerpunches. Marquez' promoter, Gary Shaw, described the jab as "beyond spectacular."

Perhaps Roach would have come up with a better strategy if amiable Vazquez hadn't agreed to let Roach interrupt camp to train Oscar De La Hoya in Puerto Rico for his supermatch with Floyd Mayweather. You could call that a stroke of good fortune for Marquez, but in fact he was struck by bad luck once again the night of his victory. In the preceding bout, challenger Victor Burgos was rushed from the ring on a gurney after almost 12 one-sided rounds with flyweight titlist Vic Darchinyan. A false report circulated in the postfight media conference that Burgos was doing fine at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center and might well be sent home from the emergency room. But, in fact, he was undergoing emergency brain surgery.

The next morning, with his countryman clinging to life in a medically induced coma, it was clear that the greatest victory of Marquez' career had been marred by a tragedy beyond his control before he even stepped into the ring. Four days after surgery, Burgos was brought out of the coma, and doctors said he was moving and responding well. As this issue goes to press, we can only hope for his complete recovery and the establishment of improved systems to prevent other such tragedies.

Meanwhile, Marquez and Vazquez agreed on the spot to an immediate rematch this summer. Their respective promoters, Shaw and Scott Woodworth, of Sycuan Promotions, said they would go along, but business often has a way of intruding on these matters.

Marquez twists Vazquez' head with yet another powerful left hand. The sort of punishment Marquez is capable of meting out could possibly dissuade some 122-pound contenders from pushing too hard for a title shot. Vazquez, however, is eager to try again.

No pointless posturing or foolish insults between the fighters preceded the match. Marquez and Vazquez can fight, and they both knew it. They behaved like gentlemen before, during, and after they concentrated all their efforts on beating each other into submission.

Marquez' next opponent, whoever it turns out to be, faces huge obstacles.

"Marquez is a complete fighter," former junior featherweight champion Paulie Ayala observed. "He hits hard, he can box, and he's very accurate. That's how he gets all those kayos. Plus, he's in great shape. You know he's got a great team. And you know what? As big a puncher as he is, he has no hand problems. That's unusual. Obviously, he's doing something to strengthen his fingers and hands."

All this makes managers none too eager to put their fighters into the ring with him.

Although Beristain takes plenty of raps for his managing skills, managers and promoters usually fail to get small fighters into the spotlight, even when they're truly talented. Building a Marquez-Vazquez rivalry, the promoters hope to repeat previous rivalries between Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales and Ayala vs. Johnny Tapia. In fact, they were already talking about a trilogy. The trouble with rematches, though, is they freeze out other contenders. Celestino Caballero, Daniel Ponce De Leon, and Ricardo Cordoba, for example, may have other scheduling ideas of their own.

But if they'd seen Vazquez' face an hour after the fight, they might think a lit-

Even though he was even on one official card and only down by two points on the other two, Vazquez suddenly quit at the end of the seventh round. His nose, which had been broken earlier in the fight, kept getting worse and he said he could no longer breathe properly.

tle harder about facing Marquez. When he sat down at the postfight press conference, Vazquez' face was already more swollen than it was only 20 minutes earlier. A half-hour later, the swelling had expanded to affect even his lips and his speech. Marquez, in his first outing as a junior feather, showed once again he was born to punch.

Four years ago, when the fierce Marquez finally got a bantamweight title shot against Tim Austin, he startled even some of his biggest boosters by stopping the previously undefeated fighter in the eighth round. Somehow, probably because he's not exactly a heavyweight, Marquez still surprises people with his power.

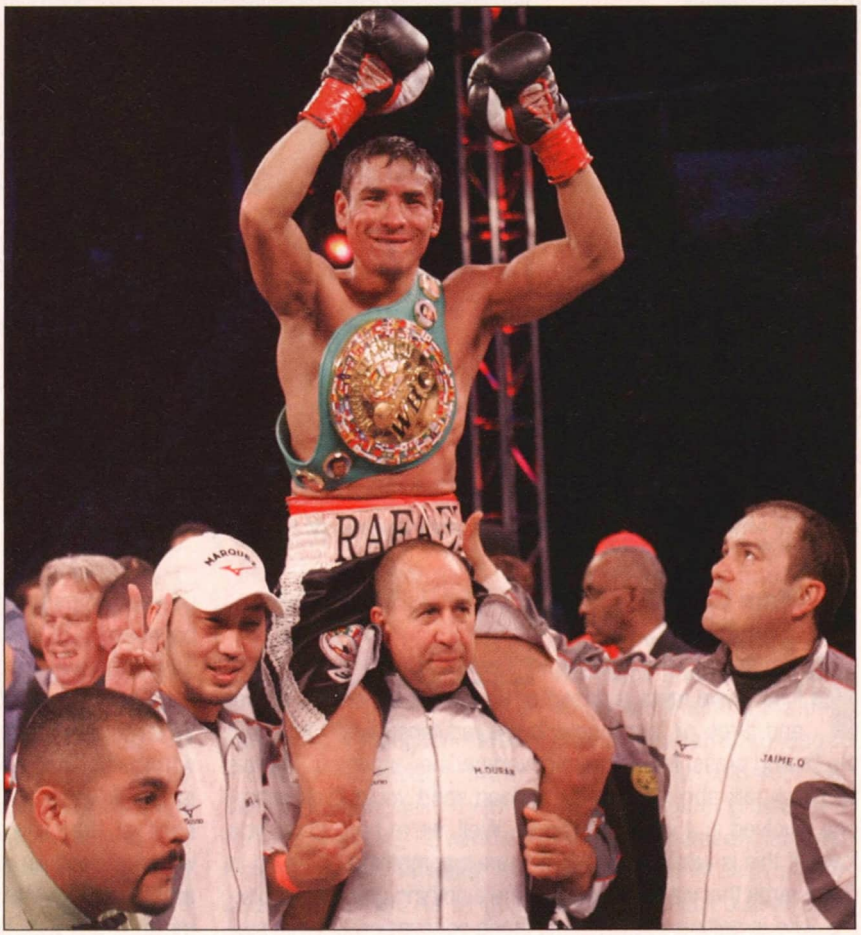
Rating Marquez along with popular Mexican stars Barrera and Morales, long-time matchmaker and promoter Don Elbaum said he'd put Barrera first, then Marquez, then Erik Morales. "And I'd say Marquez is only very slightly under Barrera," Elbaum added. "Looking pound-for-pound right now, there's Pacquiao, Mayweather, Marquez. He's right up there. In fact, as good as Vazquez is, I can't believe anyone could have believed he'd really have a chance against Marquez. Marquez is that good."

Ayala maintained it's not yet possible to consider him at Barrera's level because he just hasn't faced the same quality of opposition. But Morales has done just about everything he could do, first cleaning out the bantam division, including Austin, Mark Johnson, and Silence Mabuza, then taking out the top of the junior featherweight division from the get-go.

Ayala believes Marquez can break through the celebrity ceiling, particularly if he picks up some English. "He's articulate in Spanish," Ayala said, "and he's handsome. Fans need to know about him. He stops guys. It's what people want."

As Ayala and many others did before him, Marquez plans before he retires to go up to featherweight, where traditionally there's been more fame and fortune. But Marquez can't manufacture the great opponents he needs to prove himself to a wider audience. They'll just have to be there. It's a matter of luck. ■

Ivan Goldman is THE RING's West Coast correspondent.



Marquez is hoisted by one of his cornermen after being declared the new champion. He hopes that his purses and fame will now catch up with his awesome fighting ability.

Our Exclusive Annual Report

THE STATE OF THE GAME

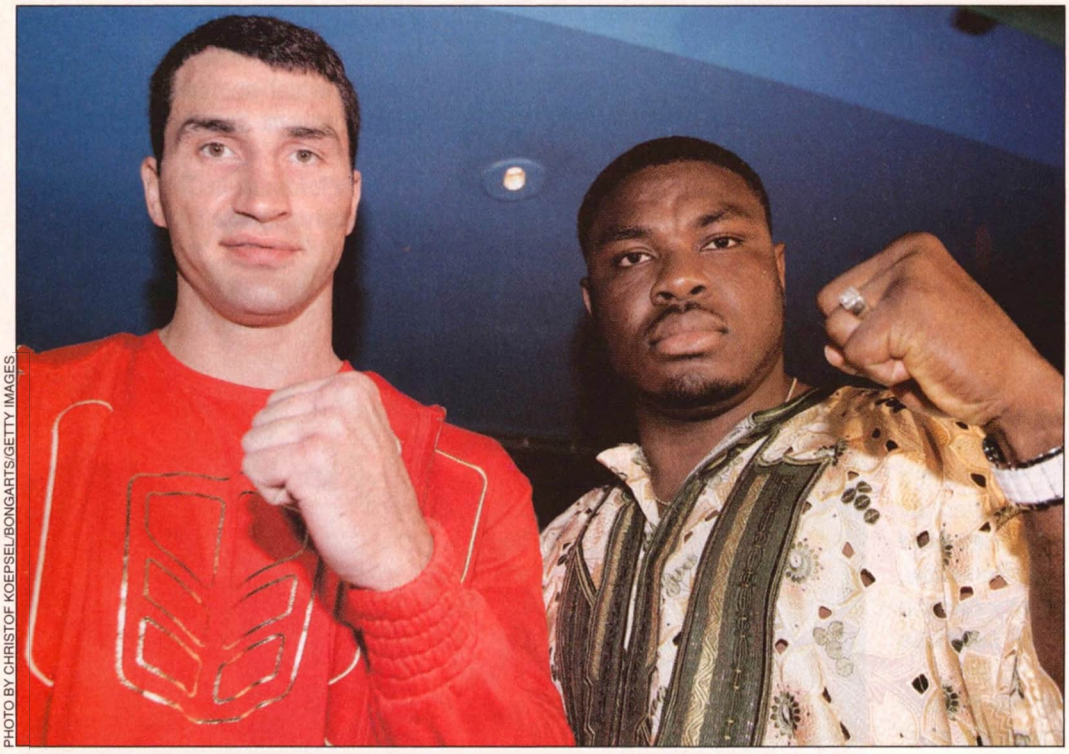


PHOTO BY CHRISTOF KOEPSEL/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

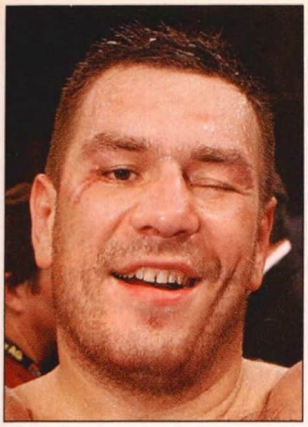
A rematch between Klitschko and Peter could create a new world heavyweight champion

By William Dettloff

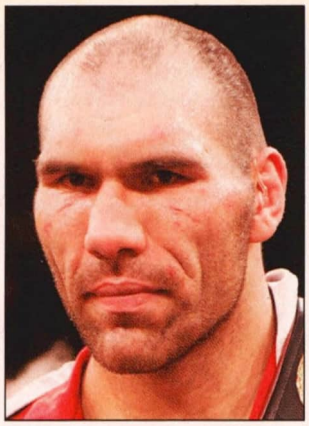
If this were a dead sport, our annual "State Of The Game" section, presented here for you and your dirty, morbid curiosities, would be about three pages long; it isn't. It's 18 pages and provides what we hope is a comprehensive look at the fight game's too-many divisions filled with fighters upon fighters who don't know the sport is dead. Don't tell them; it's more fun this way. They keep doing what they're doing, feeding their families, demonstrating purpose and direction in their lives, and giving the rest of us—you know, all three or four of us—something to watch in between NASCAR races or ballgames. Please.

From the way the fight game is covered in the press, you'd think there were a dozen or so boxers left on the planet and three or four lonely, bug-eyed fans—and that's just the boxing press. Mainstream coverage is even worse. There's so much talk about this being a dead sport you'd think everyone involved in it was a mortician. Well, we're here to tell you folks: If this is what dead is like, there's something going on in graveyards that we can't see. If there's nothing going on in boxing, who is getting and giving all those concussions? What's all that blood doing on the canvas? And why do the top promoters have so much money?

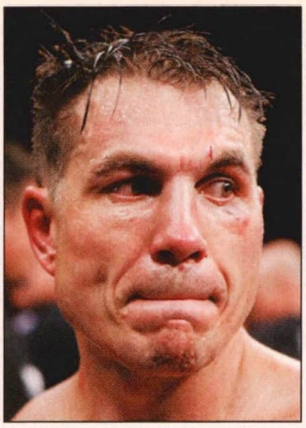
Either way, note this along the way: In each weight division we select a fighter who "Deserves A Title Shot." What this designation means in each division depends on whether or not a RING champ exists. If yes, then the fighter we've named is the one who is most deserving of a shot at that RING champ. If there's not a RING champ, we've picked an unbelted contender worthy of a shot at an alphabet title. We wish we didn't have to explain what that means, but just because the sport is still kicking doesn't mean it's perfect. (This section is based on results through March 18, 2007.)



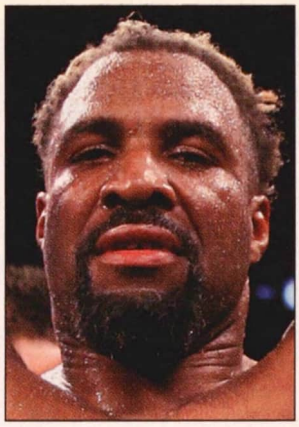
Ruslan Chagaev



Nicolay Valuev



Oleg Maskaev



Shannon Briggs

HEAVYWEIGHT

Who says the heavyweight division didn't make any progress in the last year? We're much closer to clarity now than we were 12 months ago. First, **Wladimir Klitschko** established himself without question as the best big man in the business by destroying **Chris Byrd**, **Calvin Brock**, and mandatory no-hoper **Ray Austin**. At the same time, **Samuel Peter**'s two wins over **James Toney** (especially the second one) effectively removed Toney from the title hunt and made Peter the number-two guy. And **Oleg Maskaev**'s improbable win over **Hasim Raman** marked the end of Rahman's days loitering near the top of the division. That's a pretty irrefutable one, two, three at the top, and you've gotten rid of two guys who were mucking things up for no good reason. See things getting clearer? That's called progress, folks.

On the downside, **Shannon Briggs**, a wildcard in the division if there ever was one, survived **Sergei Liakhovich**, who had upset **Lamon Brewster**. And the giant **Nicolay Valuev** defended the WBA title after beating the rapidly (and thankfully) fading **John Ruiz**. The announcement that **Vitali Klitschko** was returning in the hope of a fight with Maskaev screwed things up again, especially for Peter, whose two wins over Toney were supposed to get him a shot at Maskaev's WBC belt. Regardless of how that soap opera shakes out (it hadn't yet as we went to press), we would expect Maskaev to lose to either Peter or Klitschko, removing yet another older, vulnerable guy from the mix.

The more of those old warhorses are out of the way the better it is for the division's future, which we think isn't half bad. Uzbekistan's **Ruslan Chagaev**—who will have faced Valuev by the time you read this—looks like a pretty interesting puncher, and, believe it or not, there are a couple of younger American heavyweights who could make some noise: **Eddie Chambers** and **Kevin Johnson** are a pair of confident, quick-fisted boxers. **Chris Arreola** is nothing thrilling, but he's going to outwork a lot of guys. Also, Australian puncher **Bowie Tupou** has moved to America and may spice things up when he gets a few fights under his belt. And who knows, maybe Bob Arum can convince **Tommy Zbigowski** to get in a ring again.

Think About It: It's startling how quickly the demographics of a business can change. As recently as December 2001, slightly less than six years ago, our heavyweight ratings included six Africa-Americans in the top 10: Raman, Mike Tyson, Kirk Johnson, Evander Holyfield, Mount Whitaker (!), and Chris Byrd. As of this writing, only three appear: Briggs, Brewster, and Toney. Of those three, Briggs is 35 years old and highly vulnerable; Brewster is 33 and the very picture of inconsistency; Toney, at 38, is in pugilistic free-fall, and Byrd is 36 and may not fight again at heavyweight. Stunning.

HEAVYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Samuel Peter
Best Boxer
Wladimir Klitschko
Most Protected
Roman Greenberg
Is He Still Around?
Evander Holyfield
Matchmaker's Dream
Samuel Peter-Lamon Brewster
Deserves a Title Shot
Samuel Peter
Most Fun to Watch
Brian Minto
On the Way Down
John Ruiz
Underrated
Nicolay Valuev
Overrated
Sultan Ibragimov
Best Fight in 2006
Sergei Liakhovich W 12 Lamon Brewster

CRUISERWEIGHT

After a year in which the cruiserweight division established itself as one of the more entertaining in the game, it rather returned to its moribund self in 2006. Oh, things started off well enough with **O'Neil Bell**'s riveting stoppage of **Jean-Marc Mormeck** to claim THE RING belt in January. Then Bell didn't fight again all year.

Bell wasn't the only cruiserweight doing nothing. Mormeck fought just once, beating sub-.500 Sebastian Hill, which somehow qualified him for a rematch with Bell. But when they finally got together again, in March 2007, it was worth the wait. Mormeck and Bell staged a wildly entertaining Matthew Saad Muhammad-esque brawl in Paris, with both men totally disregarding defense in favor of repeatedly lambasting each other with power-shots. Mormeck built an early lead, barely survived late-round exhaustion, and

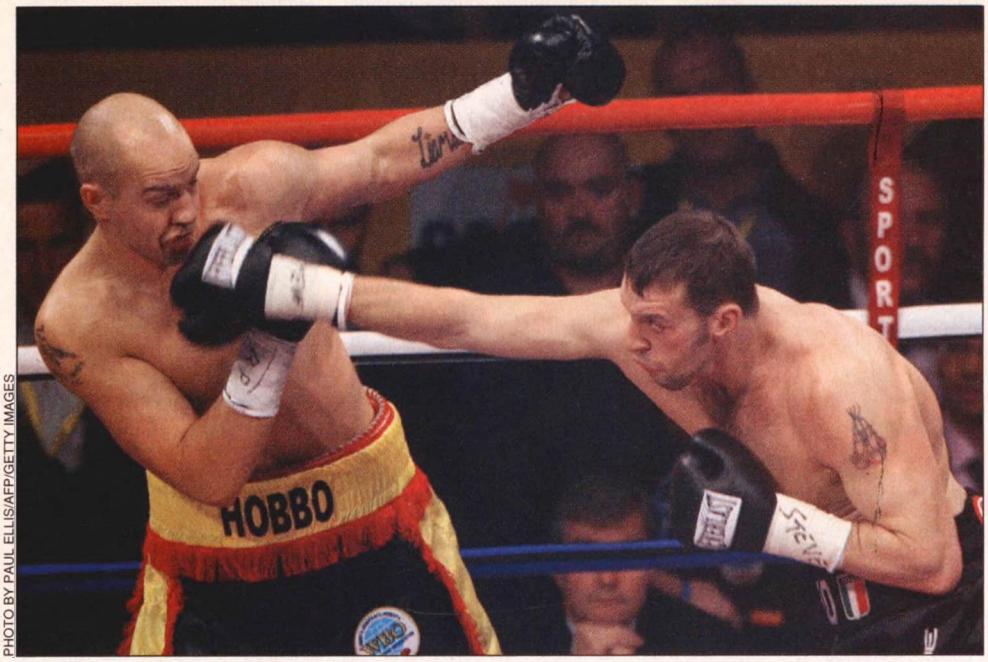


PHOTO BY PAUL ELLIS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Maccarinelli tags Mark Hobson with a long right en route to first-round kayo

regained the world title with a close, unanimous decision.

Wayne Braithwaite fought just twice in '05, losing to Mormeck and **Guillermo Jones**. Jones, one of the game's more interesting freaks of nature (remember when he was a junior middleweight?) went all the way up to heavyweight after beating Braithwaite. And **Dale Brown**, who fought so well against Bell a couple of years ago, lost twice and dropped out of the top 10. For the cruiserweights, it was like the '90s all over again.

Any good news? Some, mostly in the form of puncher **Darnell Wilson**, who, after dropping four in a row, stopped **Daniel Judah**, Brown, and **Kelvin Davis** in consecutive fights. He's a threat to the guys at the top of the division. Also, Philadelphia's **Steve Cunningham** dropped a decision to **Krzysztof Wlodarczyk** in Poland, but the IBF mandated a rematch whose exact date and locale were undecided at press time. Both are solid guys. England's **David Haye** and **Vadim Tokarev** and **Enzo Maccarinelli** of Russia and Wales, respectively, head up the lower half of the division, and we like Detroit's **Johnathon Banks**, who's being guided by none other than Emanuel Steward. He can punch. This isn't a bad division. We just need the guys to start fighting one another on a more regular basis.

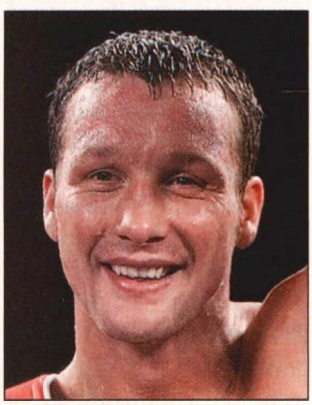
Think About It: You have to hand it to Virgil Hill, who can still fight a bit, like it or not, at 43 years old. Regardless of the outcome of his fight with comebacking Henry Maske, which will have taken place by the time you read this, Hill is a very probable Hall of Fame inductee five years after he retirees. In a way, we respect him more now than we did when he was young and spry and motoring around the ring, jabbing the bejesus out of everyone. He doesn't have the legs anymore, but he's still in there slinging punches with these young guys. **Valery Brudov** is nothing to write home about, but he was 30 years old and 30-0 (23) when Hill outpointed him by three scores of 118-110 in January '06. Can Hill compete with the best in the division? Of course not; he's not Bernard Hopkins. But for longevity alone, you've got to give him credit.

CRUISERWEIGHT

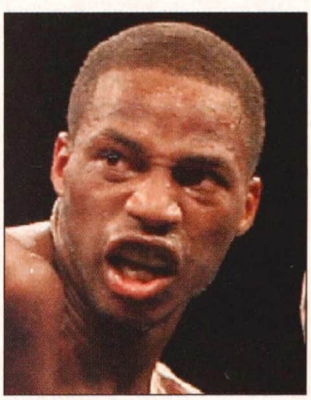
Best Puncher
O'Neil Bell
Best Boxer
Steve Cunningham
Most Protected
Johny Jensen
Is He Still Around?
Arthur Williams
Matchmaker's Dream
Jean-Marc Mormeck-Darnell Wilson
Deserves a Title Shot
Darnell Wilson
Most Fun to Watch
Johnathon Banks
On the Way Down
Dale Brown
Underrated
Wayne Braithwaite
Overrated
Vincenzo Cantatore
Best Fight in 2006
O'Neil Bell KO 10 Jean-Marc Mormeck

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

From a historical perspective, we like and admire what **Bernard Hopkins** did when he dominated **Antonio Tarver** to win the world title, but for the rest of the division, it's not so great. Why? For roughly the same reason we knew the reign at heavyweight of 45-year-old George Foreman would drag down *that* division: The champion is an older, wealthy star and under no real imperative to defend the title against young, worthy challengers. Is Hopkins against **Winky Wright** in July an interesting fight? Sure it is. But it does nothing for **Zsolt Erdei** or **Clinton Woods** or **Chad Dawson** or even **Glen Johnson**, whom Hopkins beat what feels like a



Clinton Woods



Chad Dawson

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Hopkins upsets Tarver to take light heavyweight championship

lifetime ago. Hopkins at this point is fighting pretty much for the fun of it, for the money, and to prove what an old man can do if he's in the mood. His days of worrying over what everyone else thinks are long gone.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Tomasz Adamek
Best Boxer
Bernard Hopkins
Most Protected
Otis Griffin
Is He Still Around?
Keith Holmes
Matchmaker's Dream
Zsolt Erdei-Chad Dawson
Deserves a Title Shot
Chad Dawson
Most Fun to Watch
Paul Briggs
On the Way Down
Eric Harding
Underrated
Julio Gonzalez
Overrated
Rico Hoye
Best Fight in 2006
Tomasz Adamek W 12
Paul Briggs

Not so for the undefeated Erdei of Hungary, whose wins over **Paul Murdoch**, **Thomas Ulrich**, and **Danny Santiago** (not to mention earlier wins over **Julio Gonzalez** and **Mehdi Sahnoune**) make him no worse than second or third best in the division, depending on how far gone you think Tarver is. If you ask us, it's long, long gone, which is good news not only for Woods and Johnson, but for Dawson, too, whose win over **Tomasz Adamek** in February landed him the WBC belt and validation of what everyone was saying about him all along: The kid from New Haven, Connecticut, is a real fighter and we would expect him to challenge Erdei for the top spot once Hopkins is through playing in the sandbox.

The rest of the division? Argentina's **Hugo Garay** might be interesting, Gonzalez can still fight a bit, and we'll watch **Paul Briggs** against damned near anybody. A guy who can only land right hands and at the same time has no idea how to avoid one is a born TV fighter. Hell, we'd watch him and Adamek every night of the week.

Think About It: Did anyone think the day would ever come when we would see **Roy Jones** as not just a former star (because that happens to everybody), but as the butt of a tired old joke? So damaging were Jones' two losses to Tarver and his kayo loss to Johnson that he's not even in the discussion anymore, even if he is still technically a top-10 fighter. Jones himself saw his win over the desperately limited **Prince Badi Ajamu** as cause for celebration and reportedly priced himself out of a rematch with Hopkins. (You knew those two egos could never get into a ring together again.) If Jones was just a little humble and recognized on some level that the good days are gone, we'd feel a bit of melancholy sadness for him, the way we do for all one-time greats. But his ego, still one of the biggest in the game, doesn't permit it. So we snigger.

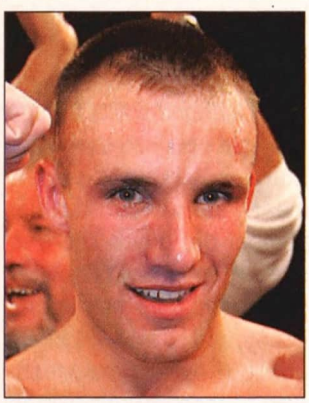
SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

The best thing for the health of any weight class is to have a champion at the top who is interested in cleaning out the division. That's not the case here. **Joe Calzaghe** defended the WBO belt 100 times or whatever (and THE RING belt once) over the past decade, but that's not the same thing. And he's at the point now when it appears he wants only the highest-exposure fights. (His defense against **Peter Manfredo**, which will have concluded by the time you read this, is a step in that direction.) If that's truly the case, he is unlikely to defend against the likes of **Librado Andrade**, **Lucian Bute**, or **Carl Froch**, three reasonably qualified top-10 contenders. We don't begrudge Calzaghe the big fights; we've wanted him for a long time to go after them. It's just that it puts the rest of the division on hold.

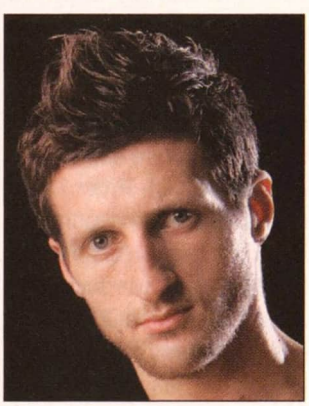
If Calzaghe wants a huge fight, but one with some risk, there is **Mikkel Kessler**, clearly no worse than the number-two guy in the division. His consecutive wins over **Anthony Mundine**, **Eric Lucas**, and **Markus Beyer** do not lie (Kessler was scheduled to face the undefeated Andrade as we went to press). Canada's Bute is fairly unproven, but wins over **James Obede Toney**, **Kabary Salem**, and **Sergey Tatevosyan** warrant some interest. Same with Froch, who beat a couple of decent pugs in **Brian Magee** and **Tony Dodson**. Also, we don't think **Allan Green**'s loss to **Edison Miranda** necessarily hurts him at 168. Maybe fighting at 162 weakened him, maybe it didn't. He still hasn't lost a fight at 168, and we'd give him a reasonable shot of beating all but the division's top guys.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Mikkel Kessler
Best Boxer
Joe Calzaghe
Most Protected
Andre Dirrell
Is He Still Around?
William Joppy
Matchmaker's Dream
Joe Calzaghe-Mikkel Kessler
Deserves a Title Shot
Mikkel Kessler
Most Fun to Watch
Jeff Lacy
On the Way Down
Mario Veit
Underrated
Peter Manfredo
Overrated
Sakio Bika
Best Fight in 2006
Jeff Lacy W 10 Vitali Tsypko



Mikkel Kessler



Carl Froch

Finally there's **Jeff Lacy**, who went from being overrated to underrated in the span of two fights. Don't undersell him based on his struggle with **Vitaly Tsypko**. The injury he fought with for 10 rounds or so was the same kind that once convinced **Vitali Klitschko** to quit on his stool. He remains a dangerous puncher, and until someone proves otherwise, one of the top five super middleweights in the world.

Think About It: Calzaghe may be the best super middleweight of the last decade, but every time he seems close to cementing that perception, some guy pops up to cast doubt on it. From the late-'90s until he retired in 2004, it was **Sven Ottke**, who matched Calzaghe almost win for win. Back and forth they went at the top of the ratings. They never met, but Calzaghe assumed the top spot by default when Ottke retired. That lasted until Lacy won an alphabet strap. Then Lacy was the guy. Calzaghe destroyed him. Finally he could relax a little, right? Wrong. Now it's Kessler some are calling the world's best 168-pounder. There's always going to be a guy challenging the top dog, but this phenomena seems particular to Calzaghe. Of course, he could have removed all doubt by meeting and beating Ottke and could do the same if he and Kessler get together. Don't count on it happening.

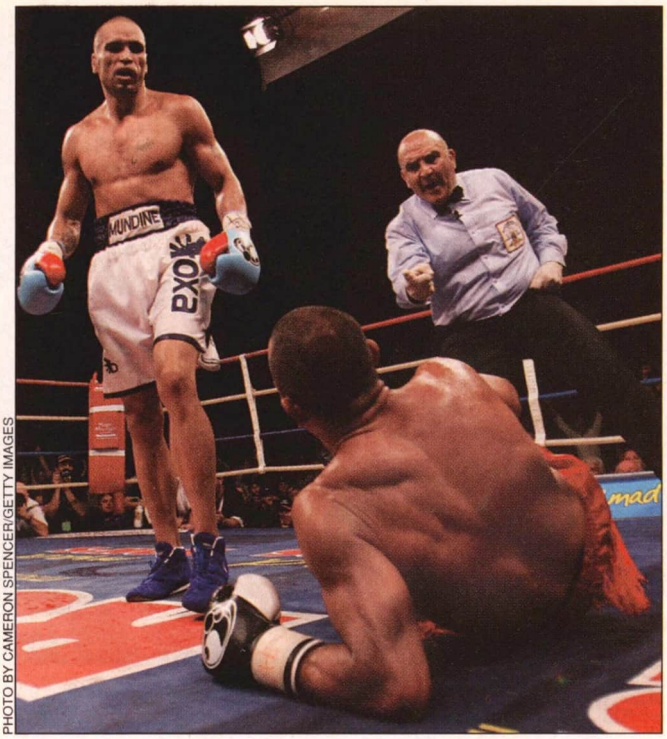


PHOTO BY CAMERON SPENCER/GETTY IMAGES

Mundine stops fellow Australian Sam Soliman in Sydney

MIDDLEWEIGHT

What an odd division this is, and what an odd champion sits atop it. **Jermain Taylor** is a young, strong, desperately motivated fighter with an unusual predilection for fighting the best guys he can find. Defending against **Bernard Hopkins** and **Winky Wright**, and, yes, **Kassim Ouma**, demonstrates a thirst for greatness that we only wish was common among all fighters. The problem is his ability doesn't quite match his desire. The result so far has been virtual standstills against elite guys (Hopkins and Wright) and an unremarkable win against a guy a level lower in Ouma.

As we went to press, Taylor's so-called "easy" fight against season-one *Contender* champion **Sergio Mora** was falling apart. His promoter, Lou DiBella, was scrambling for a replacement, with Cory Spinks the leading candidate. As welter Zab Judah has already starched Spinks, that's not a match with much of an upside for the 160-pound champ.

Taylor's top contenders are a strong bunch, worthy of such an earnest champion. Off his draw with Taylor and convincing win over **Ike Quartey**, Wright probably deserves another shot at the title. Apparently dissatisfied with the money he was offered for such a fight, he signed for a July chess match with Hopkins instead. Hard to see how that can be attractive to anyone but the geekiest of

MIDDLEWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Edison Miranda
Best Boxer
Winky Wright
Most Protected
Ronald Hearns
Is He Still Around?
Raul Marquez
Matchmaker's Dream
Jermain Taylor-Arthur Abraham
Deserves a Title Shot
Winky Wright
Most Fun to Watch
Edison Miranda
On the Way Down
Howard Eastman
Underrated
Kelly Pavlik
Overrated
John Duddy
Best Fight in 2006
Willie Gibbs KO 12 Lenord Pierre

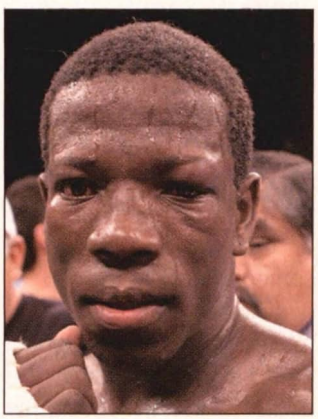
PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Taylor and Wright battle to a draw

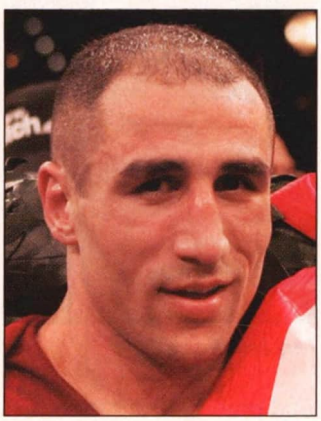
boxing geeks, but okay. **Arthur Abraham** is a star in the making, having last year beaten **Shannan Taylor**, **Kofi Jantuah**, and then **Edison Miranda** in a marvelously foul-filled slugfest in Germany in which Arthur went eight rounds with a broken jaw. And it wasn't one of those broken jaws you don't learn about until afterward: His head looked like a Halloween pumpkin. The guy is all fighter. Miranda's stock went way up with a pair of HBO-televised wins over **Willie Gibbs** and **Allan Green**, and a showdown with the peaking **Kelly Pavlik** was being discussed as we went to press.

The rest of the division is comprised of interesting if underwhelming fighters, several of whom you know very well. **Felix Sturm** and **Javier Castillejo** (who were scheduled to meet in April in a rematch to Sturm's 10th-round kayo win last July) and **Sam Soliman** are solid, flawed, and unspectacular. Argentina's **Mariano Carrera** may or may not be as effective when he's not on Clembuterol, a steroid whose presence was detected in his blood following his win over Castillejo (which was changed to a disqualification loss). We'll have to wait and see. **Amin Asikainen** and **Sebastian Sylvester** are unproven but worth watching.

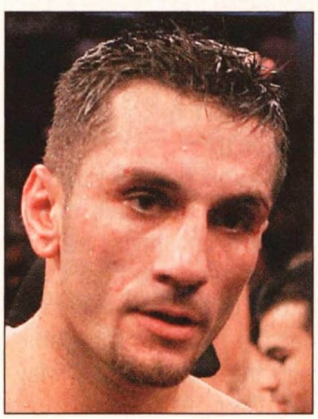
Think About it: If we were to build the perfect prizefighter, we could do it from the top 10 guys in the middleweight division. We'd take Taylor's youth, desire, and athleticism, and Miranda's punch. We'd use Abraham's chin and toughness, Soliman's stamina and workrate, and Wright's defense. Throw in Sturm's wholesome good looks to attract the ladies, and Castillejo's experience—68 fights over a 19-year career—and you have something pretty darned close to the perfect fighting machine.



Edison Miranda



Arthur Abraham



Sergio Mora

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

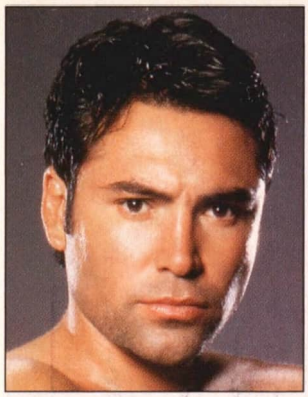
We don't know exactly when it happened, but somewhere along the line this became one of the more interesting divisions in the game. And that's with **Shane Mosley** back down at welterweight where he belongs. Where to begin? Probably with the remarkable **Travis Simms**, who came back from a two-year layoff to absolutely manhandle the tough and capable **Jose Antonio Rivera**. It's not that Simms looked as good as he did before he left, it's that he looked better. We'd never seen him so sharp. He'd make an excellent opponent for any of the top guys, and in fact we'd make him a favorite over top-rated **Cory Spinks**, who will always have trouble with guys who can punch, which doesn't bode well for him if the mooted bout with middleweight champion Jermain Taylor comes to pass. Spinks' close win over the robotic but underrated **Roman Karmazin** was almost a disaster, and if it's a 15-round fight (we'll never let go of that dream, will we?), Spinks doesn't make it. **Sergei Dzindziruk** still hasn't lost a fight, but the best fighter in the division still may be **Kassim Ouma**. He was desperately outsized by **Jermain Taylor**, but backed the champion up all night (though that may say as much about Taylor's shortcomings as it does about Ouma's strengths). It's clear that there was something very wrong with him when he lost to Karmazin. **Vernon Forrest** didn't impress against **Ike Quartey**, but still might be able to pull together a decent win or two. On the downside,

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

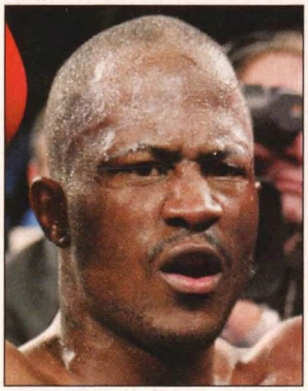
Best Puncher
Oscar De La Hoya
Best Boxer
Travis Simms
Most Protected
James Kirkland
Is He Still Around?
Miguel Angel Gonzalez
Matchmaker's Dream
Alejandro Garcia-Julio Cesar Garcia
Deserves a Title Shot
Roman Karmazin
Most Fun to Watch
Alfonso Gomez
On the Way Down
J.C. Candelo
Underrated
Yuri Foreman
Overrated
Ishe Smith
Best Fight in 2006
Jose Antonio Rivera W 12 Alex Garcia

we would expect veterans **Quartey**, **Ricardo Mayorga**, and **Fernando Vargas** to be retired by the end of 2007, but the division's ageless gatekeeper, 37-year-old **Verno Phillips,** figures to keep on plugging along. (As we went to press, a match between Mayorga and Vargas was still being discussed, but hadn't been finalized.) And, oh yeah, there's a guy named **Oscar De La Hoya** who fights at this weight every couple of years.

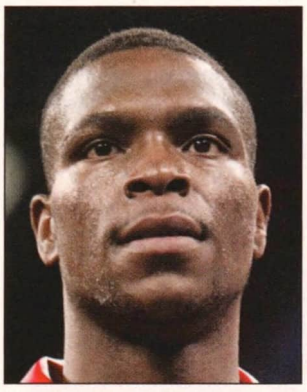
Think About It: Nobody expects De La Hoya to become a three-times-a-year fighter again regardless of the outcome of his fight with Mayweather. But what if he did? How would the De La Hoya who destroyed Mayorga do against the guys who make up the best at 154? Pretty well, we think. We'd take De La Hoya over Spinks, Dzindziruk, Quartey, Phillips,



Oscar De La Hoya



Travis Sims



Cory Spinks

and probably Karmazin. On the other hand, we'd expect De La Hoya to lose to Simms, Ouma, and maybe Forrest, who is not the guy he used to be and whom we think got lucky against Quartey. Still, we would expect his height, reach, and skills to give De La Hoya trouble. That's a close one. Either way it's a moot point. De La Hoya is no more interested in fighting second-tier beltholders and contenders than he is flipping burgers at a fast-food joint. It would be like Jack Nicholson playing the lead in your local theater production of *King Lear*. Which is to say it's not happening.

WELTERWEIGHT

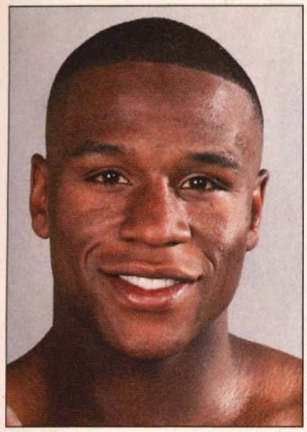
Now we're talking. If you want to know what the best division in boxing looks like, look no further than right here. You want stars? You've got **Floyd Mayweather** and **Shane Mosley**. Prospects? They don't come much hotter than **Paul Williams**. You want tough, established, seasoned contenders who can fight? Try **Antonio Margarito**, **Carlos Baldomir**, and **Miguel Cotto.** Wild cards? **Kermit Cintron** and **Joshua Clottey**. Welterweight even has, at the moment at least, **Arturo Gatti**, everyone's favorite bloody warrior. That's a lineup, folks—the best one in the business.

It doesn't matter what happens in Mayweather's fight with De La Hoya in May. Win or lose, "Pretty Boy" is not staying at junior middleweight. He'll be right back down to 147 to defend the world title against Cotto or Mosley or Cintron or someone else in the top 10 (we hope). Hey, maybe he retires, as he said he would after he beat Baldomir. We doubt it, but do you know what? It wouldn't matter that much. This is a deep, deep division. It doesn't really need him. But let's assume he doesn't retire (because he won't).

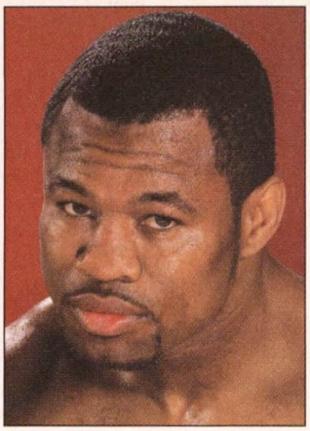
Maybe by the summer Margarito will have fought Williams or maybe he'll be getting ready to fight Cotto in one of the best fights that can be made in the game, with the winner to get Mayweather. Maybe around then Mosley will have beaten Baldomir or another contender, and we'll get Mayweather-Mosley, or Mosley against Clottey, who was scheduled to face the incoming **Diego Corrales** as we went to press. Wouldn't that be tasty? There's not a bad fight to be made in the top 10, folks. Throw in **Luis Collazo**, who certainly didn't disgrace himself in his loss to Mosley, and throw in too **Zab Judah**, who is a threat to anyone at 147 (for the first four or five rounds anyway), including Cotto, whom he is tentatively scheduled to face in June. **Oktay Urkal** is unexciting and was expected to retire after the pounding he took from Cotto, but if he stays in the game, he's a very live underdog against all but the top guys. Any way you slice it, everything a fight fan could want is right here at 147 pounds.

WELTERWEIGHT

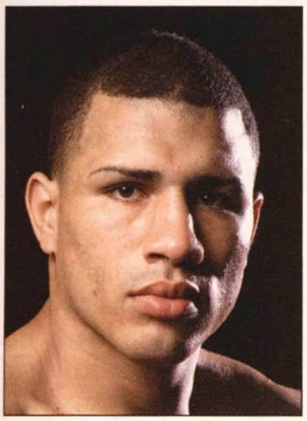
Best Puncher
Miguel Cotto
Best Boxer
Floyd Mayweather
Most Protected
Dmitriy Salita
Is He Still Around?
Vince Phillips
Matchmaker's Dream
Miguel Cotto-Antonio Margarito
Deserves a Title Shot
Shane Mosley
Most Fun to Watch
Kermit Cintron
On the Way Down
Oscar Diaz
Underrated
Joshua Clottey
Overrated
Zab Judah
Best Fight in 2006
Kermit Cintron KO 10 David Estrada



Floyd Mayweather



Shane Mosley



Miguel Cotto

Think About It: The last time the welterweight division was this good was about 10 years ago when its stars were named Pernell Whitaker, De La Hoya, Felix Trinidad, and Ike Quartey. Then, as now, there were solid back-up guys, such as Oba Carr, Jose Luis Lopez, Wilfredo Rivera, and Yory Boy Campas. Today's welterweights compare very favorably. Cotto isn't Trinidad, and none of today's guys has De La Hoya's drawing power. But Mayweather's in Whitaker's neighborhood. We'd take Margarito over Campas or Rivera. Mosley today, past his prime, is still better than Carr was (though Carr was very good). And Cintron we think would have held his own against Lopez, unless Lopez showed up in the mood to fight, which was rare.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

It wasn't exactly the kind of year **Ricky Hatton** would have liked as the world champion, but we guess he'll take it. It got off to a terrible start when he decided to gamble up at 147 against Luis Collazo, very nearly lost, and wisely returned to safer waters at 140, only to stink out the joint against limited clubber **Juan Urango**. What's his reward for those two sub-par showings? A date with **Jose Luis Castillo**, fresh off his suspension and still painfully bony even at 140 pounds. Their meeting, which is scheduled for June, is an important and attractive matchup that has the potential to be made un-watchable if Hatton is permitted to clutch his way to victory. For what it's worth, Castillo didn't have much to crow about either following his tougher-than-expected win over **Herman Ngoudjou**. Still, it's one of the better matches that can be made in any division.

Outside of that matchup, the weight class isn't as good as it was last year for the simple reason that its best boxer (**Floyd Mayweather**) and its best puncher (**Miguel Cotto**) both abandoned it for the opportunity and peril available at 147. Nobody has stepped up in a significant way to challenge the survivor of Castillo-Hatton. **Junior Witter** still has the second-prettiest record in the division, but wins over **Demarcus Corley** and **Arturo Morua** aren't going to make him a bigger star. Many expected **Vivian Harris** to be a world champion by now, and though he looked good demolishing a burnt-out **Stevie Johnston**, his emotional deficiencies were on display again when he barely outpointed the far less talented **Juan Lazcano**. **Lovemore Ndou** is a known commodity, as is Corely and as is **Souleymane M'Baye**, who stopped **Raul Balbi** late in 2006. The good news is that there are three good young prospects coming up: Philadelphia's **Demetrius Hopkins**, whose one-punch stoppage of **Michael Warrick** was one of the best knockouts of the year, and **Kendall Holt** and **Mike Arnaoutis**, who will have fought one another by the time you read this. (Can you imagine? A pair of fast-rising top-10 guys meeting one another!) So

LONGEST REIGNING TITLISTS

The graph below illustrates the game's most established titlists (Ring, WBC WBA, or IBF) along with the number of consecutive months each has held the title. The last two years have seen an alarming turnover in the game's champions and titlists. In 2005, five of the previous year's top seven were deposed. Last year saw the departure of four more, though that may be misleading; Rafael Marquez' win over Israel Vazquez, which was for Vazquez' Ring junior featherweight title, effectively removed two long-reigning guys with one fight. Still, only one fighter who appeared in this spot last year, Pongsaklek Wonjongkam, remains. The rest are new to this ranking.

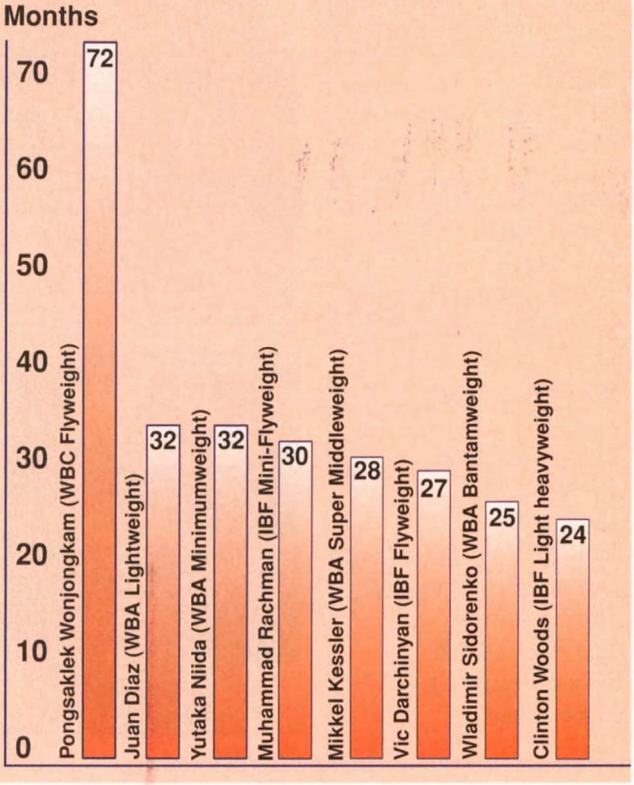


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

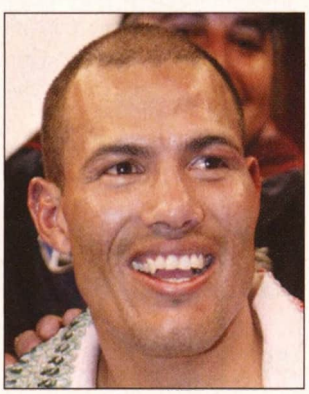
Hatton cracks Juan Urango with a flush right

things are looking up.

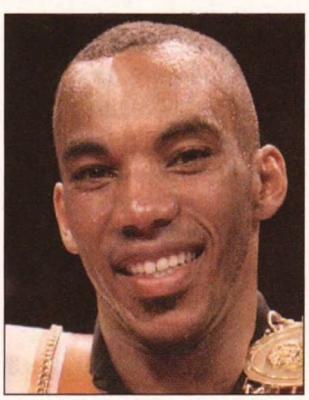
Think About It: How come Hatton wasn't so damned boring when he was pummeling Vince Phillips and Michael Stewart and Ray Oliveira? He didn't fear their punches. He walked though them and let his fists go. Same thing more recently with Carlos Maussa. Remember that Ricky Hatton? Compare him to the guy who couldn't keep his arms off Kostya Tzsyu or Collazo or Urango. It's because those guys could punch and they hurt Hatton. Interestingly, he's thus far avoided most of the anathema elicited by John Ruiz, whose style, we hate to tell you folks, Hatton apparently has chosen to emulate against certain types of opponent. You can be certain he'll try it against Castillo too, who is not as strong as Hatton but is a better boxer.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Randall Bailey
Best Boxer
Jose Luis Castillo
Most Protected
Rock Allen
Is He Still Around?
Victor Hugo Paz
Matchmaker's Dream
Ricky Hatton-Jose Luis Castillo
Deserves a Title Shot
Junior Witter
Most Fun to Watch
Jose Luis Castillo
On the Way Down
Carlos Maussa
Underrated
Junior Witter
Overrated
Ricardo Torres
Best Fight in 2006
Emanuel Augustus KO 10 Jaime Rangel



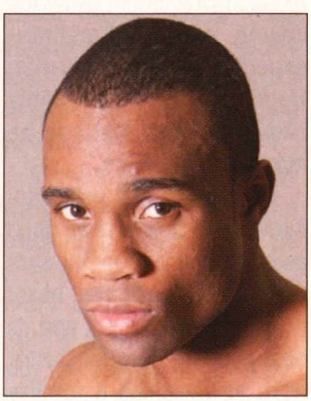
Jose Luis Castillo



Junior Witter

LIGHTWEIGHT

The last time we looked at 135 from top to bottom, we were awaiting the rubber match between **Jose Luis Castillo** and **Diego Corrales**. We all know how that turned out—it didn't. Castillo took his lumps for not taking his lumps, and Corrales, one of his era's bravest fighters, picked a different rubber match opponent in **Joel Casamayor**. Casamayor proved what Castillo would have had he made weight: that Corrales is on the brown side of ripe. Now, both Castillo and Corrales have moved on (as in "up") and Casamayor is the world champ, regardless of what the jackass sanctioning bodies will have you believe. And it's about time. We didn't think Casamayor was ever going to live up to his potential and he still might not; he's 35 and not exactly in his prime anymore. He's got to get while the getting can still be gotten.



Vivian Harris

May we suggest an opponent? **Juan Diaz** is the spryest and most exciting lightweight in the world—and not by a little. We know, his competition hasn't been the best, but it's been good enough, and who knows, his energy and enthusiasm could be enough to overcome Casamayor's significantly greater experience. Either way, when Casamayor is gone, Diaz, who is still just 23 years old for cripes' sake, is the future of the division until he burns out or graduates from junior high, whichever comes first. His biggest problem is Don King is promoting him. Ask Tim Austin about that. At any rate, as we went to press, it appeared as though Diaz would face **Acelino Freitas** in April in a very interesting matchup.

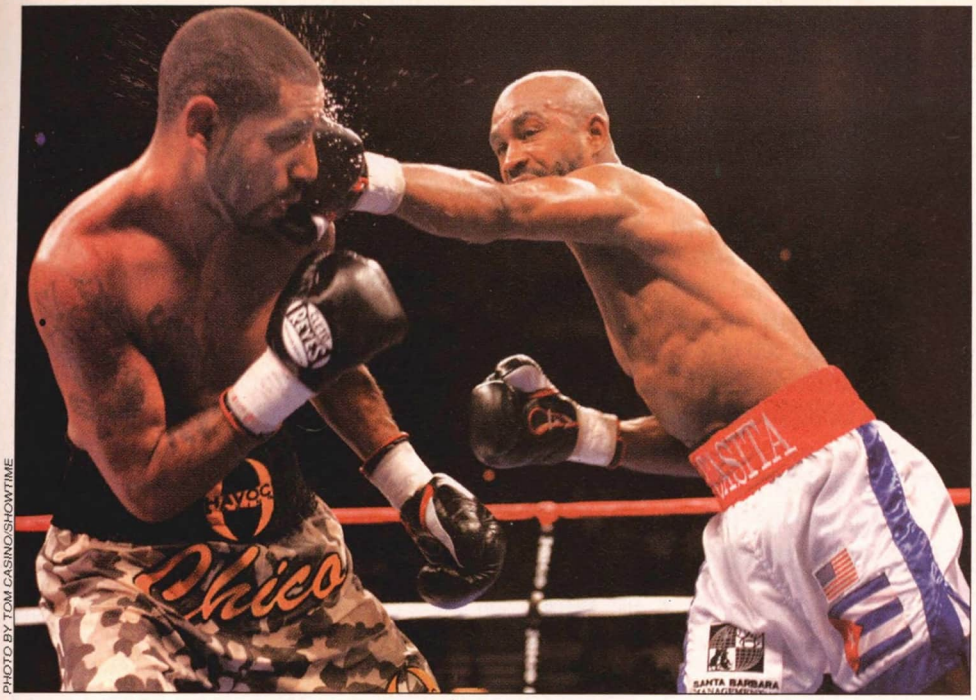


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Casamayor delivers a left to Corrales' head en route to lightweight title

LIGHTWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Almazbek Raiymkulov

Best Boxer
Joel Casamayor

Most Protected
Urbano Antillon

Is He Still Around?
Derrick Gainer

Matchmaker's Dream
Juan Diaz-Julio Diaz

Deserves a Title Shot
Juan Diaz

Most Fun to Watch
Juan Diaz

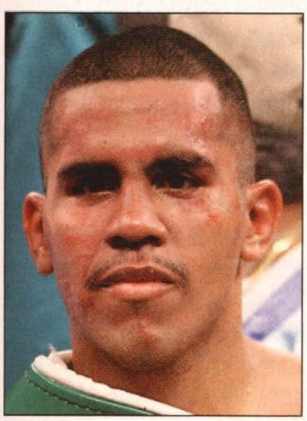
On the Way Down
Jesus Chavez

Underrated
Jose Cotto

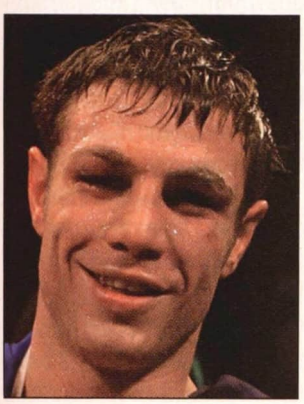
Overrated
Zahir Raheem

Best Fight in 2006
David Diaz KO 10 Jose Armando Santa Cruz

The rest of the division is filled with very familiar faces, some of them quite worn. **Julio Diaz** is only 27, but seems to have had a lifetime of hard fights, despite his win over an even more worn out looking **Jesus Chavez**, who probably would do well to retire. **Nate Campbell** and **Zahir Raheem** are hot and cold. **Almazbek Raiymkulov** (a.k.a. Kid Diamond) is very exciting, and he was as dominant in beating **Emanuel Augustus** as was anybody we've seen since Leo Dorin did it a few years back. Also worth watching is Australia's **Michael Katsidis**, whose sensational war with **Graham Earl** was an instant classic.



Juan Diaz

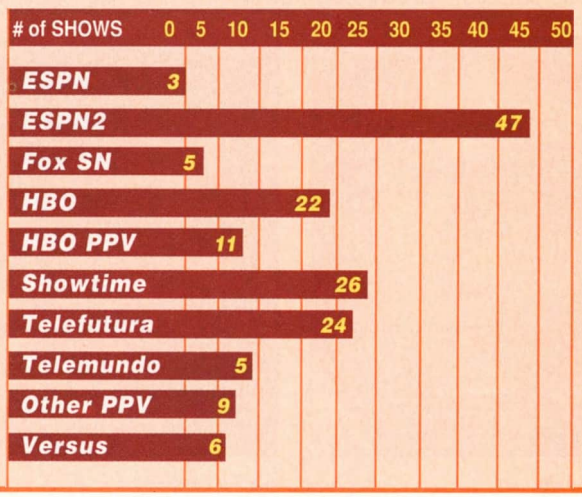


Michael Katsidis

Think About It: Zahir Raheem engendered an awful lot of support and sympathy over the last few years, first by dropping a close decision to the better connected Rocky Juarez in 2004, then by beating a living legend, more or less, in Erik Morales. His seemed the classic story of a talented, keenly avoided fighter, too good for his own good, who just couldn't ever get a break. So he finally gets a break in the form of a fight with Freitas, and what does he do? Stinks out the place so bad, nobody cared if he got robbed again, which he maybe did. Since then? An eight-round no-decision against 23-33-2 (17) Ar-

BOXING on TV

The same unfortunate trend we noted last year in this space continued in 2006: Overall, there was less live boxing on American TV than the year before, resulting in a decrease from 171 total shows in 2005 to 158 in 2006. Also, the total number of pay-per-view shows increased slightly, from 19 in '05 to 20 in '06, with an uptick in "other" PPV and HBO PPV. On the plus side, Showtime increased its number of live shows, none of which were pay-per-views (after having aired four PPVs in '05). HBO dumped fights on HBO Latino, but aired an equal number in their place on Boxing After Dark. ESPN2 aired more shows than it did in '05, and Versus Fight Night picked up some of the slack. But overall, it's not a comforting trend.



mando Cordoba. Break gotten, break squandered.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

We wouldn't argue too strenuously if you called this the best weight class in the game rather than welterweight. It's a close call, and not just because it features **Manny Pacquiao**, who's giving Mayweather a run for the top pound-for-pound slot. But it doesn't hurt. Pacquiao is such a dynamic, exciting, and charismatic guy in the ring that he tends to inject a kind of enthusiasm into all of his fights, and that's a rare ability. Even his rubber match blowout of the well-worn **Erik Morales** was electrifying. It shouldn't have been; it was expected, or should have been. But Pacquiao made it seem like a shock. This will be an exciting division for as long as Pac-Man is in it.

There's plenty to like about 130 pounds even without Pacquiao. **Juan Manuel Marquez** finally moved up from featherweight and won a bristling battle with **Marco Antonio Barrera** in March to supplant Barrera and the most logical opponent to fight Pacquiao for the vacant RING belt. We wish Marquez had jumped up a while ago, at the same time as Barrera, Pacquiao, and Morales, his contemporaries. It could have been like the 1980s Leonard-Duran-Hagler-Hearns cycle. But you can't have everything, and besides, someone had to stay at 126 and lose to speedy craftsman **Chris John**.

Anyway, if slick technicians are not your cup of tea, there's **Joan Guzman**, still undefeated at this writing, still fast and heavy-handed. He can flat-out fight. There's the eccentric Argentine **Jorge Barrios**, who made Guzman fight every second when the two met in a fierce shoot-out last June. If your thing is punchers and only punchers, you have two of the better hitters in the sport: **Edwin Valero**, who claimed an alphabet title by stopping the very sturdy **Vicente Mosquera** in Japan, and the underrated **Rocky Juarez**, who was handcuffed by Barrera in their rematch, but will get his share of knockouts still. Since when is it a crime to get schooled by one of the best of the last 30 years?

Think About It: Valero may or may not be the fighter he appears to be. (Hell, a lot of us thought Panchito Bojado looked like a young Roberto Duran.) But it got awfully hard to argue against him being a real threat at 130 when he stopped Mosquera, who is not a soft touch, in a thriller. It would be a real crime if he turned out to be one those very special fighters that come along once a generation or two, and most of the world only got to see him on grainy youtube.com clips. If five years from now he's won 60 fights and several world titles and the rest of the civilized world recognizes him as one of the best of his generation, will the commissions that barred him from fighting still feel like they did the right thing?

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

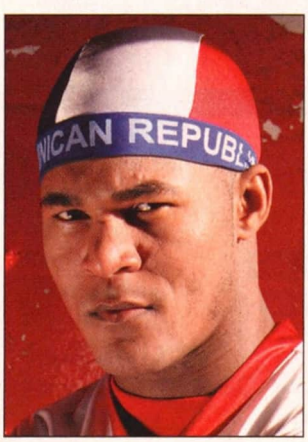
Best Puncher
Manny Pacquiao
Best Boxer
Juan Manuel Marquez
Most Protected
Alex Arthur
Is He Still Around?
Daniel Alicea
Matchmaker's Dream
Many Pacquiao-Edwin Valero
Deserves a Title Shot
Jorge Barrios
Most Fun to Watch
Manny Pacquiao
On the Way Down
Erik Morales
Underrated
Humberto Soto
Overrated
Cassius Baloyi
Best Fight in 2006
Manny Pacquiao KO 10
Erik Morales

FEATHERWEIGHT

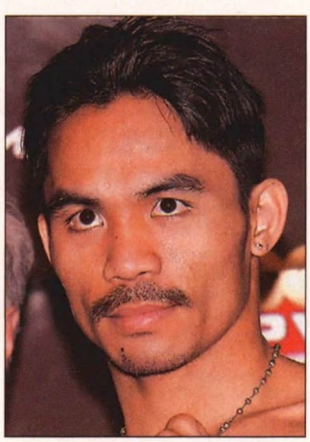
There's good news and bad news about this once wonderful division: the good is that with **Juan Manuel Marquez**' move to junior lightweight, we finally have the sense that the division looks the way it's supposed to look, the way it should have looked two or three years ago, when Marquez should have left. The bad news: It looks terrible. Not in terms of the quality of the fighters, mind you. **Chris John** is a perfectly respectable fighter. You don't beat Marquez by accident, and wins over Renan Acosta and Jose Rojas, while nothing necessarily to write home about, don't hurt. They're not world-beaters, but at least John is active. The problem is no one this side of Indonesia has ever seen John, but that might change; it's been rumored he may be coming to the U.S. soon.

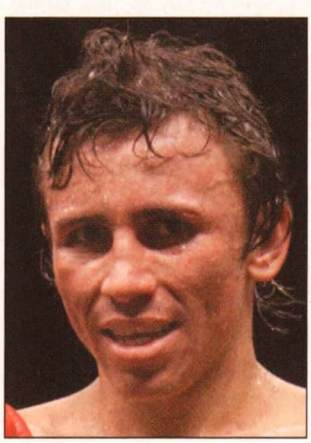
The rest of the division is equally respectable and only slightly less obscure. **Injin Chi** made some friends with a stirring loss to Erik Morales years ago, had a pair of brilliant fights with Michael Brodie (especially the first one), but hasn't fought outside Asia since. Two wins came over fellow contenders **Rodolfo Lopez** and **Takashi Koshimoto** and that's great, but ... where's the buzz?

Roberto Guerrero regained an alphabet strap by stopping **Spend Abazi** in Denmark, so maybe "The Ghost" will live up to his potential. **Martin Honorio** might make some noise down the road, as could hard-hitting



Joan Guzman


Manny Pacquiao


Edwin Valero

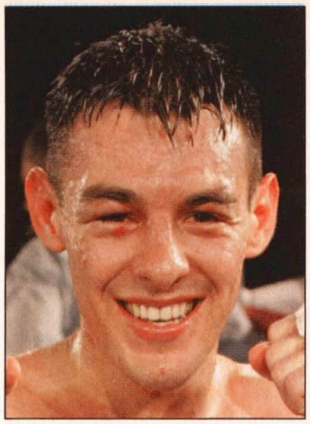
FEATHERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Jorge Solis
Best Boxer
Chris John
Most Protected
Derry Matthews
Is He Still Around?
Nicky Bentz
Matchmaker's Dream
Martin Honorio-Rodolfo Lopez
Deserves a Title Shot
Orlando Salido
Most Fun to Watch
Jason Litzau
On the Way Down
Eric Aiken
Underrated
Oscar Larios
Overrated
Orlando Salido
Best Fight in 2006
Jose Hernandez KO 8 Jason Litzau

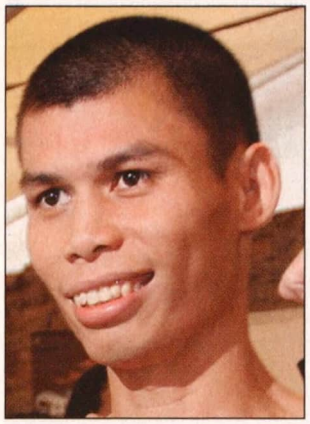
Jorge Solis, who as we went to press was preparing for his challenge of **Manny Pacquiao** up at 130.

Again, this is not a bad division, but it's overshadowed by the tremendous lineup at junior lightweight, whose stars used to do business at 126, and by junior feather, where Rafael Marquez and Israel Vazquez have become fan favorites. There is good news, though: Puerto Rico's **Juan Manuel Lopez** is making noise as one of the best-looking featherweight prospects in years, and **Rey Bautista**, who is just 20 years old, looks to grow into a solid 126-pounder.

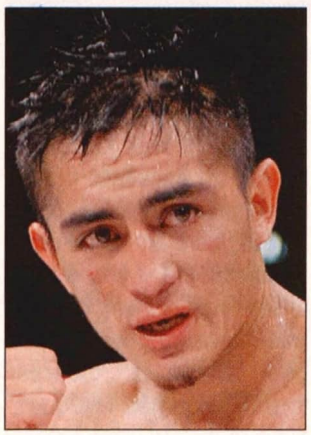
Think About It: My we're spoiled, aren't we? We had a good, long run of excellent featherweights and now it's over. The last great era? Pacquiao, Barrera, Morales, all now doing business at 130. Before them it was



Robert Guerrero



Chris John



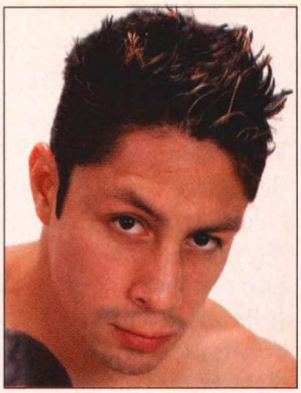
Rodolfo Lopez

Prince Naseem Hamed, who, even if he couldn't fight, was a hell of a banger and was fun, too, whether you liked him or not. He rescued the feathers from the previous fairly moribund era that included Tom Johnson, the ageless Manuel Medina, and a worn-out Kevin Kelley. Again, not bad fighters, but Hamed made us care about the little guys more than we had in a long time. We're in a spot now like we were when Luisito Espinosa, Eloy Rojas, and Johnson ruled at 126. *Shudder*. But don't fret. A new featherweight superstar (or two) is right around the corner. No division that gave us Willie Pep and Sandy Saddler could be bad for very long.

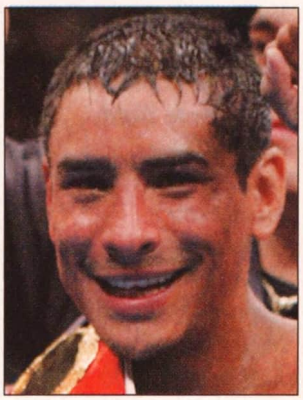
JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

Sometimes, all it takes is one outstanding, high-level match to make a division exciting, and we got it when **Rafael Marquez** moved up and stopped **Israel Vazquez** in March. For as long as it went, the fight was about everything we'd hoped it would be, with the best two fighters in the weight class taking the other's measure. Was the ending a bit anti-climactic? Sure. Anytime a world champion like Vazquez surrenders in the middle of a competitive, exciting bout, it's a let down. The good news is big fights that lack a very conclusive ending usually end up in a rematch and it looks as though this one will too. Shame on everyone involved if it doesn't. This could be one of the great trilogies of the era if it works out right.

Come to think of it, it almost has to work out right if there's going to be any excitement at 122. It's not exactly a murderers' row here. There are a few fun guys: **Daniel Ponce De Leon** is one of the purest punchers in the sport, but is so hopelessly crude and one-dimensional that his punch alone just won't do it at the higher levels. In fact, we think he was very lucky to get the nod over veteran **Gerry Penalosa** on the Marquez-Barrera card. Still, he's a guy you want to watch; his kayos of Al Seeger and Sod



Israel Vazquez



Rafael Marquez

Looknongyangtoy were must-see television. Canada's **Steve Molitor** is not nearly the puncher De Leon is, but his stoppage of **Michael Hunter** (in England no less) was fun enough. If he can maintain that level of performance against better guys, he could make some noise. Even undersized veteran banger **Mauricio Pastrana** got into the act with a shocking stoppage of **Antonio Escalante**. If that's not fun, what is?

Still, there's not too much fun about skillful **Celestino Caballero** and **Ricardo Cordoba** (who also competes at 118 pounds), who represent the most obvious challenges to Marquez after he meets Vazquez again. **Somsak Sithchatchawal** and **Sergio Manuel Medina** are sturdy enough but also mostly unexciting. Think we can get Marquez and Vazquez to fight one another six or seven times?

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Rafael Marquez
Best Boxer
Rafael Marquez
Most Protected
Kiko Martinez
Is He Still Around?
Wayne McCullough
Matchmaker's Dream
Rafael Marquez-Israel Vazquez II
Deserves a Title Shot
Celestino Caballero
Most Fun to Watch
Israel Vazquez
On the Way Down
Julio Zarate
Underrated
Mauricio Pastrana
Overrated
Michael Hunter
Best Fight in 2006
Somsak Sithchatchawal KO 10 Mahyar Monshipour

Think About It: When he won the bantamweight title against Tim Austin four years ago (was it really just four years?), Marquez was viewed primarily as a right-hand puncher with a suspect chin, a vulnerable defense, and a tendency to get lazy in the middle of a fight. Now? Yes, he still has lapses in concentration in the middle of a fight, you can still find his chin (as Vazquez did), and you can drop him if you hit it right (as Vazquez did), but he has gotten so much tighter and sharper he looks almost like a different fighter. He was mostly a puncher before. Now he's a complete prize-fighter. He's not as technically astute as his brother is, but with his punch he doesn't have to be. What a job Nacho Beristain has done with him.

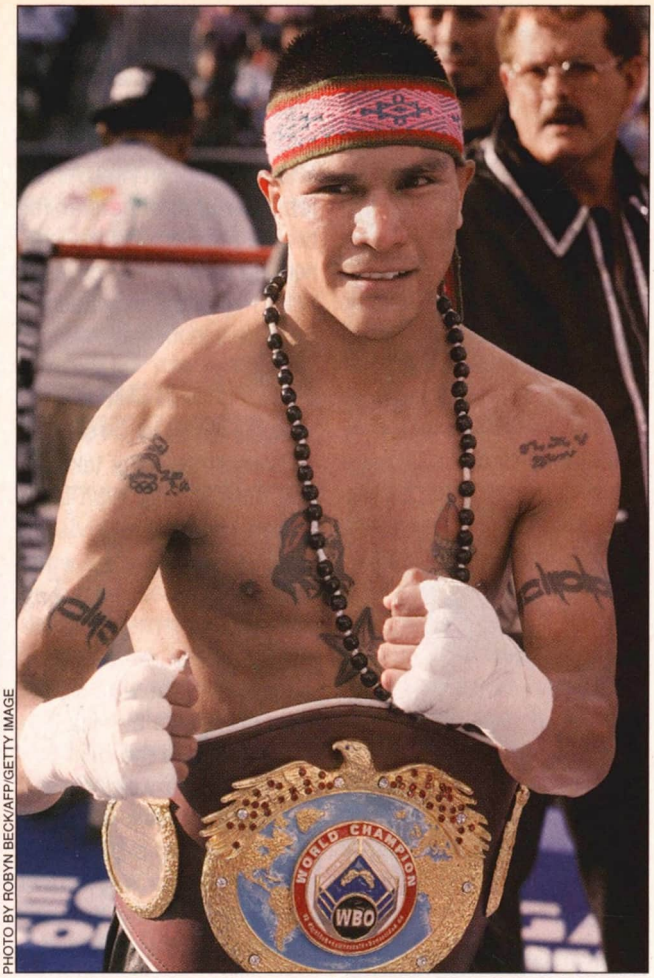


PHOTO BY ROBYN BECK/AFP/GETTY IMAGE

Pound–for-pound, Daniel Ponce De Leon is among the game's hardest hitters

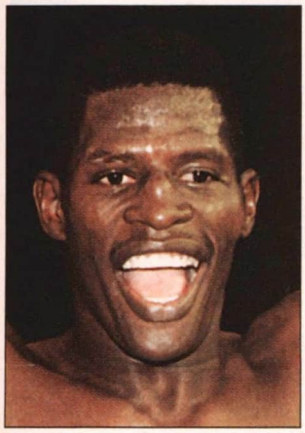
BANTAMWEIGHT

There are no two ways about it, Rafael Marquez took a lot of the excitement of this division with him when he moved to junior featherweight and beat Israel Vazquez. He was one of the very few guys in the weight class who is known to American fans and had the potential to make 118 interesting to a large audience. Now? If you can find more than a couple of people—*in boxing circles, even*—who can name a contender or two, we recommend you start hanging out with a better class of people. These are not the days of Paulie Ayala, Johnny Tapia, and Tim Austin. We don't blame Marquez for making the move; it was time. And, to be honest, it wasn't as though he was transcending the sport or anything. It was just good having an excellent fighter with a good story at the top.

Still, there are some good fighters at 118, if only we got to see more of them. **Hozumi Hasegawa**, who would have been Marquez' clearest threat, assumes Marquez' place at the top. He's already beaten **Genaro Garcia** and **Veerapol Sahaprom**. If you happen to be visiting Japan, be sure to see him fight if you can because it will be your only chance. He's never fought off the continent. Italy's **Simone Maludrotto** is earnest but untested at a world-class level, and Ukraine's **Wladimir Sidorenko** recently fought another draw with Ricardo Cordoba. We'd like to see either of them against Colombia's **Irene Pacheco**, one of the few bantams in recent times besides Marquez to get a fair amount of airtime in America. At 35 years old, he's not what he used to be, and by the time you read this, **Jhonny Gonzalez**, also a familiar name to American fans, may have beaten him. If not, he could be a threat to the top guys. Also, **Silence Mabuza** made some friends with his gutsy challenge of Marquez last August. He faces Tanzanian **Mbwana Mayunla** in May and assuming he wins there, we'd love to see him back in the States, maybe against the winner of Gonzalez-Pacheco.

Think About It: American fighters are not alone in being displaced by the ever-changing participant demographic in boxing. Many of the best and most celebrated bantamweights in recent history were Mexican: Ruben Olivares, Jose Becerra, Raul Macias, Alfonso Zamora, Carlos Zarate, Lupe Pintor, Daniel Zaragoza. It might be a bit of a stretch to say Mexicans dominated the division for a good part of the latter half of the 20th century. It would not be a stretch to say that from roughly 1965 to about 1990, they came awfully close. Many lesser titlists, Chucho Castillo, Rafael Herrera, Rodolfo Martinez, Albert Davila, Gaby Canizales, were Mexican also, or Mexican-American. There were a couple good Americans in there too—Jeff Chandler, Orlando Canizales—but it was largely a Mexican division. Today, with Marquez now a junior featherweight, there is but a single Mexican in THE RING's top 10 (Genaro Garcia). The others are from Thailand, Ukraine, South Africa, Colombia, and Italy.

Veerapol Sahaprom



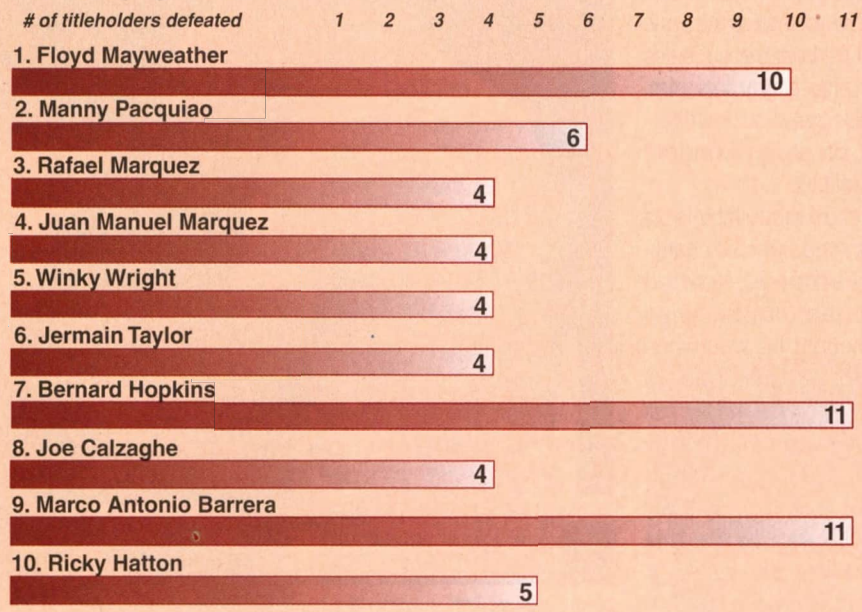
Irene Pacheco

BANTAMWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Veerapol Sahaprom
Best Boxer
Hozumi Hasegawa
Most Protected
Anselmo Moreno
Is He Still Around?
Chatchai Sasakul
Matchmaker's Dream
Hozumi Hasegawa-Veerapol Sahaprom
Deserves a Title Shot
Irene Pacheco
Most Fun to Watch
Silence Mabuza
On the Way Down
Mauricio Martinez
Underrated
Silence Mabuza
Overrated
Tshifhiwa Munyai
Best Fight in 2006
Rafael Marquez KO 9 Silence Mabuza

TITLISTS vs. TITLISTS

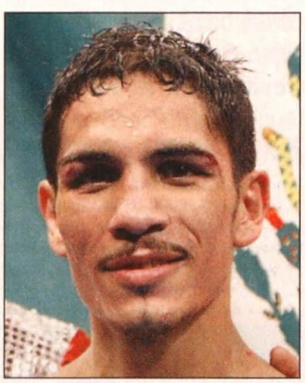
One way to calculate a fighter's worth is to count the number of champions or titleholders he's defeated. Here's how The Ring's pound-for-pound top 10 measure up against one another.



JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

It implies negative things about a weight class when the top guy has only 10 fights, which was the sum total of **Nobuo Nashiro**'s pro experience when we went to press. It's a little like when Leon Spinks beat Muhammad Ali—kind of an embarrassment to the rest of the weight class. But what can you do? When Nashiro stopped **Martin Castillo**, who had been the apparent best in the division for a good long while, Nashiro got the top spot. That's the way it works. Nothing you can do about it. And so much for Nashiro's contractual obligation to give Castillo a rematch: He went out and beat **Eduardo Garcia** instead and was scheduled to face **Alexander Munoz** in early-May.

Nashiro's inexperience aside, this is not at all a bad division. In fact, it's proof that you need only one or two charismatic guys who can fight, and a little exposure, to make even the tiny fighters interesting. At junior bantam, of course, that guy is **Jorge Arce,** who less fanatical observers may not realize is not even one of the best three or four guys in the division.



Martin Castillo

Jose Navarro

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Alexander Munoz
Best Boxer
Fernando Montiel
Most Protected
Kahramon Arzykulov
Is He Still Around?
Ricardo Vargas
Matchmaker's Dream
Jorge Arce-Vic Darchinyan
Deserves a Title Shot
Dimitri Kirilov
Most Fun to Watch
Jorce Arce
On the Way Down
Masibulele Makepula
Underrated
Nonito Donaire
Overrated
Jose Navarro
Best Fight in 2006
Luis Perez W 12 Dimitri Kirilov

But he's fun as all hell to watch, he can punch, and he's got charisma for miles. That's why he keeps getting TV dates in America. It's impossible to dislike the guy. Every division in the business should have a guy like him. And if he were a featherweight or a lightweight? Forget about it.

There are other fighters as good as Arce but less charismatic. **Fernando Montiel** may not be the whirlwind many thought he was when he first came up, but he's a slick guy who was mostly just outsized against Jhonny Gonzalez. He can fight. **Christian Mijares**, who will have faced Arce by the time you read this, also can fight, as can **Luis Perez**, who at this writing has not fought since his controversial decision win over **Dimitri Kirilov,** who's not bad either. This is a pretty strong division; be happy it's gotten the exposure it has. Otherwise we'd never know how good it is.

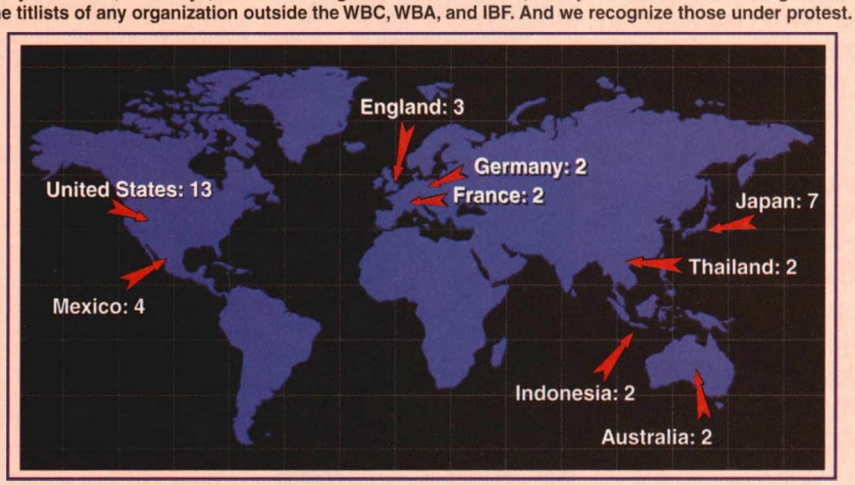
Think About it: Arce's success is unusual in that he used to be a guy who lost every time he stepped up to face someone who either was already a level higher than he or who someday would prove world class. His first career defeat came in his fifth fight, when Omar Nino, who later would upset Brian Viloria, stopped him in the first round. His next bigger test came in 1997 against Victor Burgos, who outpointed him in Mexico. Next was the knockout loss to Michael Carbajal in that amazing finale to Carbajal's eventful career. That one put Arce over the hump, though. He had no problem later tearing through Yo Sam Choi, Melchor Cob Castro (twice), Hussein Hussein (twice), Adonis Rivas (twice), and a past-his-prime Rosendo Alvarez.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Arce connects with a right to Rosendo Alvarez' face

THE CHAMPS AND TITLISTS BY COUNTRIES

It looks bad for boxing in America when you note that only 14 of the 48 fighters someone is calling a "beltholder" are Americans. But that's largely because of the chaos that's been created by the sanctioning bodies—with help from the promoters, TV networks, and, yes, the fighters. For a clearer picture, take a look at The Ring champs: There are nine of them, and five call the States home. Here's a complete breakdown by country. Note that, as always, we don't recognize "interim" titlists, multiple WBA titlists in a single division, or the titlists of any organization outside the WBC, WBA, and IBF. And we recognize those under protest.



10 countries tied with 1: Ukraine • Poland • Russia • Wales • Denmark Spain • South Africa • South Korea • Panama • Canada

FLYWEIGHT

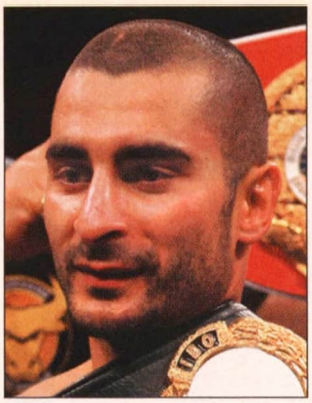
The relative popularity of the flyweight division is all the proof you need of the value of a real puncher. The punch and presence of **Vic Darchinyan** at 112 has resulted in more exposure on American television for this weight class than the efforts of all the other fighters in the division combined. How many times have you seen **Pongsaklek Wonjongkam**, probably the best fighter in the division? How many **Omar Narvaez** or **Takefumi Sakata** fights do you have on tape? But you have seen Darchinyan. At the very least, you've seen him against **Diasdado Gabi** and **Glenn Donaire** and **Victor Burgos**. That's what being a big puncher does for your

FLYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Vic Darchinyan
Best Boxer
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam
Most Protected
Panomroonglek Kratingdaenggym
Is He Still Around?
Gilberto Keb Bass
Matchmaker's Dream
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam-Vic Darchinyan
Deserves a Title Shot
Omar Narvaez
Most Fun to Watch
Vic Darchinyan
On the Way Down
Hussein Hussein
Underrated
Luis Maldonado
Overrated
Andrea Sarritzu
Best Fight in 2006
Roberto Vasquez W 12 Takefumi Sakata

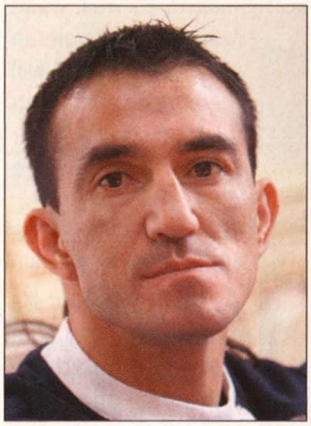
career and for all the fighters around you. High tide raising all the boats and all that.

The problem is that aside from Burgos, who was way overmatched (and suffered a career-ending brain injury when Darchinyan stopped him in the 12th round in their match in March), the other good guys around him aren't getting in on the act by fighting the big attraction. (You have to wonder why it doesn't work this way for Oscar De La Hoya, who at any given time has about 190 guys calling him out from every weight division in the business.) Fighters go where the money is. But Wonjongkam fights only in Thailand, and occasionally in Japan. Parra has beaten **Brahim Asloum**, and by the time you read this will have faced Sakata for the third time, but doesn't seem in a hurry to fight in the United States. We'd love to see Darchinyan against Narvaez, but Darchinyan would probably have to go to France or Argentina to do it, since those are the only countries in which Narvaez has fought. Of course, the best fight between 112 and 115 pounds is Darchinyan against Jorge Arce. We can always hope.



Vic Darchinyan

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam



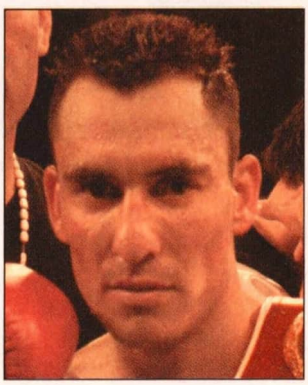
Omar Navaez

Think About It: There are some really terrible nicknames in boxing (Ray Austin's "Rainman" comes to mind), and some good nicknames that are terribly applied. Darchinyan's "The Raging Bull" falls into the latter category. He is so far from Jake LaMotta, and it really should be against the law to introduce him to a crowd using his famous nickname. First of all, LaMotta was a highly skilled, technically savvy fighter who knew every trick in the book, even if he often ignored them. Darchinyan regards form as though it were a venereal disease. LaMotta was no big puncher, with just 30 knockouts in 83 career wins. Darchinyan is one of the best pure punchers in the sport. LaMotta is Italian and was born in the Bronx in New York; Darchinyan is Armenian and lives in Australia. LaMotta was a middleweight for most of his career, and toward the end a light heavy; Darchinyan is a flyweight, lighter probably than half the stuff LaMotta and Rocky Graziano were sent to reform school for stealing. Should we continue?

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT

This is yet another division that appears so-so from a distance but gets better the closer you look at it. In fact, if you weren't looking because you don't have a general interest in 108-pound fighters, this one could slip right by you. That would be a shame because there's some good stuff going on here. And no, we don't just mean **Brian Viloria**, because he happens to be American. In case you hadn't noticed, Viloria didn't have a great 2006, losing to and then fighting a no-decision with **Omar Nino**, who tested positive for amphetamines following the rematch. This is a pretty strong division from top to bottom, with or without Viloria, who, by the way, is a pretty fair fighter.

Champion **Hugo Cazares** is representative of the division's quality; it's hard to argue with his stoppage of **Nelson Dieppa**. We'd love to see him against **Ulises Solis**, who proved his worth (and got the junior flys some much needed television exposure as an added bonus) by twice



Hugo Cazares

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Hugo Cazares
Best Boxer
Omar Salado
Most Protected
Carlos Tamara
Is He Still Around?
Domingo Guillen
Matchmaker's Dream
Hugo Cazares-Ulises Solis
Deserves a Title Shot
Ulises Solis
Most Fun to Watch
Brian Viloria
On the Way Down
Will Grigsby
Underrated
Edgar Sosa
Overrated
Juan Carlos Reveco
Best Fight in 2006
Omar Nino W 12 Brian Viloria

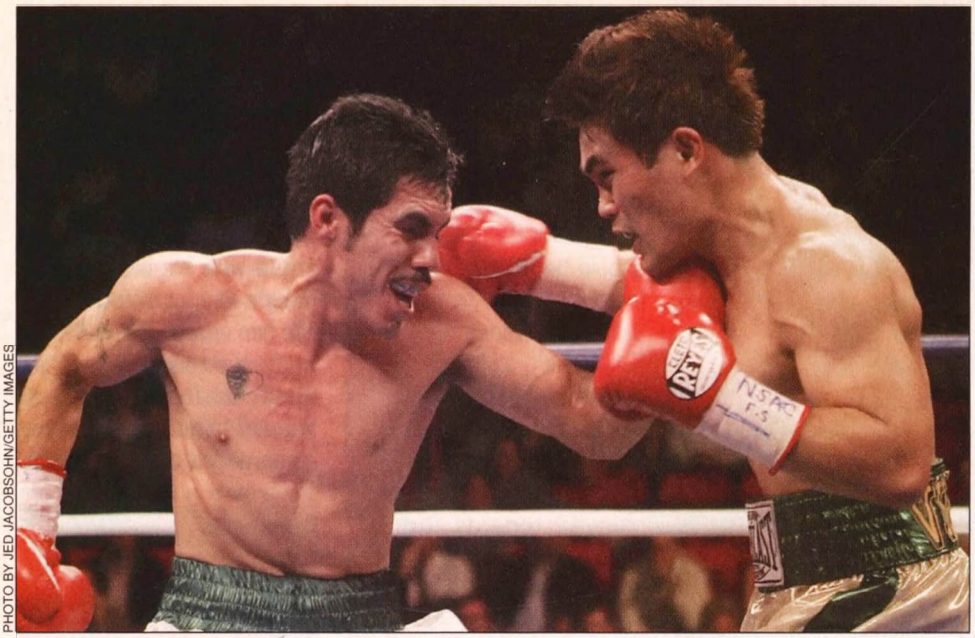


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Omar Nino and Brian Viloria slug it out in rematch that was eventually ruled a no-contest

beating **Will Grigsby**. We'll concede that **Juan Landaeta**'s consecutive losses to **Koki Kameda** mar his dependability, but he's staked a place for himself among the top guys since moving up from strawweight. Dieppa will have faced Daniel Reyes coming up from strawweight by the time you read this and, win or lose, he remains one of the division's strongest contenders. His win over Solis a few years ago cannot be discounted.

The lower half of the division is strong as well. **Jose Aguirre** is the veteran of the group and will have faced undefeated fellow contender **Omar Salado** by the time you read this. There's a lot going on 108 pounds, folks.

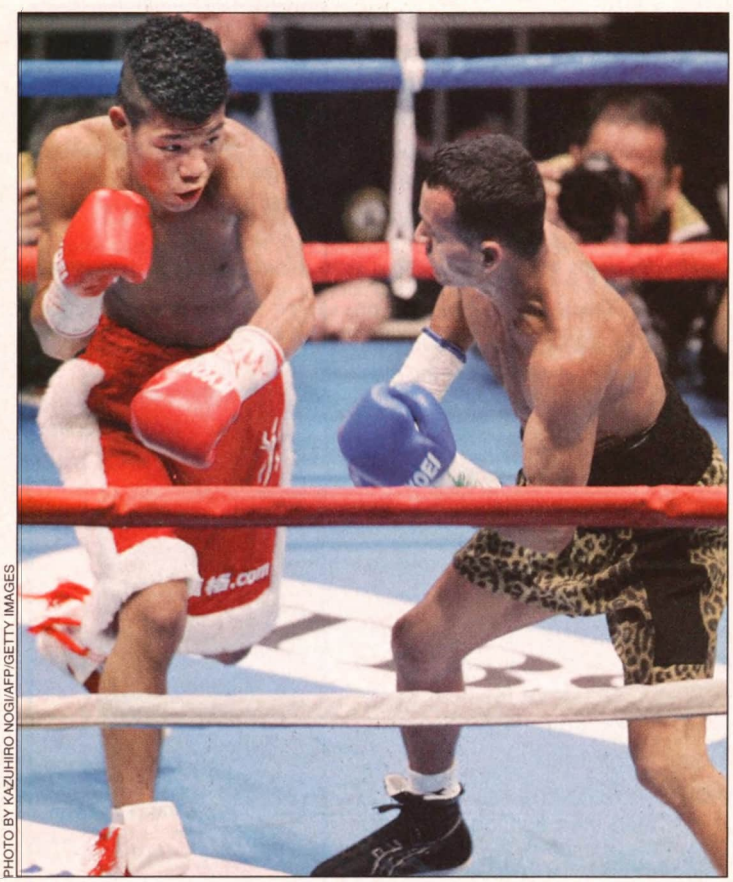


PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

After beating Landaeta in December 2006 rematch, Koki Kameda moved up in weight

Think About It: It's easy to see why fight fans, particularly in America, still love Michael Carbajal. Not only was he just the second American to win a title at 108 pounds (Joey Olivo, who won the WBA version in 1985 was the first), he was a tremendous puncher for the weight. His 33 knockouts in 49 wins gave him a career kayo percentage of 67 percent. Not as high as, say, Ricardo Lopez (74 percent) or rival Chiquita Gonzalez (72 percent), but remember this: It wasn't until Carbajal was on his last legs in '99 that Lopez finally moved up to junior flyweight after almost 10 years as the WBC strawweight champ. Why then? Also, it wasn't Carbajal who turned into a safety-first boxer in the second and third Gonzalez fights; it was Gonzalez. That versatility enabled Gonzalez to win the series, but we know whom the puncher was. Finally, there was Carbajal's improbable come-from-behind kayo of Jorge Arce in '99, after which Carbajal never fought again. Talk about going out on a high note. If he were a hundred pounds heavier, they probably would have made a movie about him.

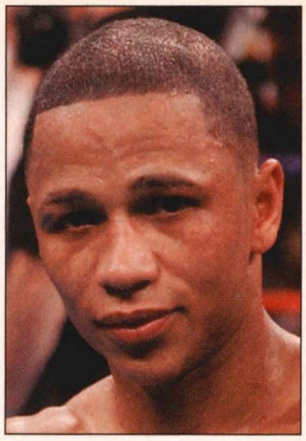
STRAWWEIGHT

There's a certain cache that strawweights have. You wouldn't think so, but there is. It comes from being a man barely big enough to look down his nose at Billy Barty and yet, at the same time, being a prizefighter. There's a wonderful juxtaposition there: almost tiny by modern human standards, but competing in the manliest sport there is. In any way you care to measure, a good, professional strawweight, at 105 pounds, is, pound-for-pound, tougher, more skilled, and more macho than your average 300-pound NFL lineman. No wonder strawweights strut. We would too.

No strawweight has better reason to strut than **Ivan Calderon**. You can say he hasn't fought the best straws out there yet, and he hasn't; that has largely to do with the particular organization that calls him their champion. Still, he bears the responsibility for that and even though he has

WHAT'S IN, WHAT'S OUT

IN	OUT
Back hair	No hair
Ruslan Chagaev	Sergei Liakhovich
The Ghost	Lights Out
Sam Peter	Title eliminators
Edison Miranda	Allan Green
Four round-card girls	Ed Darian
Emanuel Steward (again)	Floyd Mayweather
Albinism	Melanin
Fight Night On Versus	HBO Latino



Ivan Calderon

STRAWWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Daniel Reyes

Best Boxer
Ivan Calderon

Most Protected
Donnie Nietes

Is He Still Around?
Satoshi Kogumazaka

Matchmaker's Dream
Eagle Kyowa-Yutaka Niida

Deserves a Title Shot
Ivan Calderon

Most Fun to Watch
Eagle Kyowa

On the Way Down
Isaac Bustos

Underrated
Pornsawan Kratingdaenggym

Overrated
Juan Palacios

Best Fight in 2006
Eagle Kyowa W 12 Lorenzo Trejo

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Niida lands a left to the chin of Colombian challenger Ronald Barrera

fairly recent wins over top-10 guys **Daniel Reyes** and **Isaac Bustos**, he absolutely should seek out fights with **Yutaka Niida** or **Muhammad Rachman**. We would make him the favorite over either. He's one of the best pure boxers in the game right now and by that we mean in the top three or four when it comes to hitting and not getting hit. If he were a heavyweight ... well, he'd still bore a lot of people, but at least they'd know who he is.

There are other good strawweights too. Rachman and Niida are two of the longest-reigning beltholders in the sport *(see sidebar)*. Bustos has been in a mostly downward spiral for years and yet refuses to go away entirely. **Eagle Kyowa**, with wins over hard-hitting **Rodel Mayol** and highly rated **Katsunari Takatyama**, is very interesting and might have the style to give Calderon a very hard time. This is a fun little division, even if it appears stagnant right now. Some of these little guys can fight.

Think About It: Cache or not, when you get right down to it, it's kind of awful to be a strawweight. How awful? Glad you asked. In the 20 years that the division has existed, no strawweight has ever won Fighter of the Year (the closest anyone has come is Michael Carbajal, who won it as a junior flyweight in '93.) No strawweight fight has ever been voted Fight of the Year (Carbajal's win over Chiquita Gonzalez won in '93), and of all the knockouts that have taken place at 105 pounds, never has one been voted Knockout of the Year. Of the thousands of rounds fought between 105-pound warriors, never in the division's history has one been judged as the best Round of the Year. Same with Upset of the Year and Comeback of the Year. No strawweights. Why is this? Three probable reasons: First, exposure. We don't see many strawweights in America. Second, Ricardo Lopez. Lopez was dominant for a full decade, or for half as long as the division has existed. Third, the division is superfluous; it shouldn't exist in the first place. It shows. ■

BACK ISSUES OF KO

Back issues of several editions of *KO Magazine,* the acknowledged leader in boxing journalism, are still available in limited quantity. Since its inception in 1980, *KO* has become known for its quality stories and columns and peak-action photographs. Don't delay. Supplies are running out!

June 1983: WBA Jr. Middleweight Champion Davey Moore: Bracing For Duran's Last Stand. Color Pinup: Donald Curry. Interview: Pinklon Thomas. Also: Duran-Cuevas, Hagler-Sibson.

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Oct. 1983: Is Larry Holmes Finished? Color Pinup: Greg Page. Interview: Marvis Frazier. Also: Marvin Hagler, Bobby Chacon, Jack Dempsey.

July 1984: Donald Curry: "I'm Better Under Pressure." Color Pinup: Gerrie Coetzee. Interview: Curry. Also: Pipino Cuevas, John Mugabi, Bill Costello, M. Spinks-Davis.

Aug. 1984: WBC Heavyweight Champion Terrible Tim Witherspoon: A Superstar Of Tomorrow? Color Pinup: Rocky Lockridge. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Marvin Hagler, Gomez-LaPorte.

Oct. 1984: Golden Boy Mark Breland: Can He Be The Next Sugar Ray? Color Pinup: Jaime Garza. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Bramble-Mancini, Sugar Ray Leonard.

Nov. 1984: Thomas Hearns: "Hagler Is Shakin' Like A Leaf On A Tree!" Color Pinup: Tim Witherspoon. Interview: Livingstone Bramble. Also: Rosario-Davis, Marlon Starling.

Feb. 1985: Gerry Cooney: How Far Can He Go This Time? Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Ray Mancini. Also: Dream fights, Hector Camacho.

March 1985: Next For Marvelous Marvin Hagler: The Only Fight That Really Matters. Color Pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Santos-Medal, Meza-Garza, Holmes-Bonecrusher.

May 1985: Thomas Hearns: *KO* Fighter Of The Year. Color Pinup: Gerry Cooney. Also: Camacho-Ramirez, Truth Williams, Year In Review.

July 1985: Aaron Pryor: Has Hawk Time Run Out? Color Pinup: Donald Curry. Interview: Greg Page. Also: Ray Mancini, James Shuler, Costello-Hatcher.

Aug. 1985: King Cobra: "Hagler-Hearns Is Done And I'm Better Than Both Of Them!" Color Pinup: John Mugabi. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Larry Holmes, Roberto Duran, DeWitt-Lee.

Oct. 1985: Still Champ After All These Years: Larry Holmes—A Legend Continues To Grow. Interview: Mark Breland. Also: Michael Spinks, Milton McCrory, Wilfredo Gomez.

Nov. 1985: McGuigan! The Pluck Of The Irish. Also: Julio Cesar Chavez, Thomas-Weaver, Donald Curry, featherweights.

Dec. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "Larry Holmes Betrayed Boxing." Color Pinup: Hagler-Mugabi. Also: Mike McCallum, Tyrell Biggs, Camacho-Ramirez.

Jan. 1986: Macho Mania! Hector Camacho Takes Aim At 10 Tough Targets. Color Pinup: Jimmy Paul. Interview: Alexis Arguello. Also: Truth Williams, Curry-McCrory.

Feb. 1986: King Michael: How Long Will He Rule The Heavyweights? Also: Barry McGuigan, Shawn O'Sullivan, Spinks-Holmes, *Rocky IV,* world's best fighter poll.

Oct. 1986: They're Back!!! The Cooney Circus Returns. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Jimmy Paul, Mike Tyson, Donald Curry.

Dec. 1986: Larry Holmes' Message To Mike Tyson: "Show Me You Can Kick My Butt!" Color pinup: Mark Breland. Interview: Holmes. Also: Witherspoon-Bruno, Evander Holyfield, Cruz-McGuigan, Danny Lopez.

Feb. 1987: Upset Of The Decade: Has Honeyghan Cut Short The Curry Era? Color Pinup: Marvin Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Edwin Rosario, Hector Camacho.

June 1987: New WBA Welterweight Champion Mark Breland: He's Got A Lot To Smile About. Interview: Marvin Hagler. Color Pinup: Greg Haugen. Also: Michael Olajide, Carlos Monzon.

Oct. 1987: Greatness Beckons: When Will Mike Tyson Answer The Call? Color Pinup: Michael Olajide. Interview: Tyrell Biggs. Also: Paz-Haugen, Marvin Hagler.

Nov. 1987: Michael Spinks: The War With Tyson Is Okay With Him. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Frankie Duarte. Also: Matthew Hilton, Hagler-Czyz.

Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King—But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

Jan. 1988: The Collapse Of A Hero: Why Breland Never Hit The Mark Of Greatness. Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Michael Nunn, Alexis Arguello, lightweights.

Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

July 1988: Superfight History Dictates: Don't Expect The Expected From Tyson-Spinks. Color Pinup: Roger Mayweather. Interview: Dr. Ferdie Pacheco. Also: Roberto Duran, Azumah Nelson, Barkley-Olajide.

Aug. 1988: Tyson-Spinks: *KO's* Fearless Forecast Of Superfight '88. Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Matthew Hilton. Also: Lockridge-Knight, Evander Holyfield, Lloyd Honeyghan.

Sept. 1988: Tyson-Spinks, The Aftermath—What If Tyson Wins; What If Spinks Wins? Color Pinup: Frank Tate. Interview: Marlon Starling. Also: Barry McGuigan, Simon Brown, risk-taking.

Oct. 1988: Middleweight Terrorism: Iran Bombs The Hit Man. Color Pinup: Don Lalonde. Interview: Frank Bruno. Also: Roger Mayweather, Marvin Hagler.

Dec. 1988: Sugar Ray's Comeback: Why? Color Pinup: Simon Brown. Interview: Kevin Rooney. Also: Michael Nunn, best fighter poll, welterweight wars.

Jan. 1989: The Troubled Times Of Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Lloyd Honeyghan. Interview: Gil Clancy. Also: Meldrick Taylor, Jeff Fenech, Boxing's Champs.

Aug. 1989: Special 100th Issue. Color Pinup: Hagler vs. Hearns. Also: The *KO* Years, 50 most influential people, '80s ratings, best of *KO* Interview, year-by-year review, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Sept. 1989: "I Beat Up Tyson Before, I'll Do It Again," by Carl Williams. Color Pinup: Michael Nunn. Also: Chavez-Mayweather, Brian Mitchell, Marv Albert.

Feb. 1990: George Foreman Risks A Multimillion-Dollar Shot At Tyson. Color Pinup: Brian Mitchell. Interview: Riddick Bowe. Also: Simon Brown, Molina-Lopez, East vs. West.

June 1990: A Sugar-Free Future? Thomas Hearns Is Looking Up. Color Pinup: Glenn McCrory. Interview: Michael Moorer. Also: Matthew Hilton, Molina-Suarez, Foreman-Cooney, Camacho-Paz.

July 1990: *KO* Interview—Sugar Ray Leonard. Color Pinup: Jorge Paez. Also: Michael Nunn, Buster Douglas, Jibaro Perez, the Olympians.

Aug. 1990: Meldrick Taylor: Brilliance In Defeat. Color Pinup: Buster Douglas. Interview: Teddy Atlas. Also: Buddy McGirt, Dokes-Ruddock, Simon Brown.

Sept. 1990: *KO* Interview—Buster Douglas. Color Pinup: Macho Camacho. Also: Thomas Hearns, Nigel Benn, Greg Haugen, Boxing Hall of Fame.

Oct. 1990: Send In The Clown: Is Jorge Paez A Phenom Or A Fraud? Color Pinup: Paul Banke. Interview: Tony Lopez. Also: Chavez-Taylor II, Jesse Benavides.

Nov. 1990: The Comeback Of Mike Tyson: A Crooked Course Straight To The Top. Color Pinup: Tony Lopez. Interview: Don Dunphy. Also: Davis-Breland, Riddick Bowe, federal commission.

Dec. 1990: The Heart Of The Matter: Who Will Survive The Holyfield-Douglas War? Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Virgil Hill. Also: Michael Carbajal, Ruelas Brothers, best fighter poll.

Jan. 1991: Macho Ado About Nothing? Why Hector Camacho Wants To Be Believed. Color Pinup: Meldrick Taylor. Interview: Irving Rudd. Also: Sugar Ray Leonard, Orlando Canizales, Vinny Pazienza.

Feb. 1991: 10 Fighters To Fear: Boxing's Most Destructive Hitters. Color Pinup: Razor Ruddock. Interview: Ray Mercer. Also: Roberto Duran, Saoul Mamby, Mills Lane, Sugar Ray Robinson.

May 1991: Ruddock Eyes The Big Upset Of Tyson. Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Jeff Fenech. Also: Virgil Hill, Pernell Whitaker, Alex Ramos, Simon Brown, Buddy McGirt.

June 1991: Exclusive *KO* Interview: Evander Holyfield. Color Pinup: Raul Perez. Also: Norris-Leonard, Charles Williams, champs of 1971 vs. 1991, J.C. Chavez.

July 1991: Riddick Bowe: Is He Destined To Be Heavyweight Champ? Color Pinup: Michael Carbajal. Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Bobby Czyz, Buster Douglas, Mark Breland.

Aug. 1991: Desert Storm II: Will The Tyson-Ruddock Rematch Be Different? Color Pinup: Loreto Garza. Interview: Michael Carbajal. Also: Brown-Blocker, Fenech-Nelson preview, Harold Brazier, Yuh-Carbajal.

Sept. 1991: Remember Me? I Won The Fight! What "The Real Deal" Still Has To Deal With. Color Pinup: Ray Mercer. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Larry Holmes, southpaw heavyweights, Toney-Nunn, Brown-Taylor.

Oct. 1991: Thomas Hearns Works Another Miracle! Now There Are More Hills Left To Climb. Color Pinup: Humberto Gonzalez. Interview: Mike McCallum. Also: Norris-Curry, Richard Steele, Troy Dorsey.

Dec. 1991: Tyson vs. Holyfield—The Experts Analyze The Elements That Will Decide The Fight. Color Pinup: Joey Gamache. Also: Michael Moorer, Pernell Whitaker, Greg Richardson, Robert Quiroga.

Jan. 1992: The Tyson-Holyfield Showdown: An Exclusive Forecast By George Foreman. Color Pinup: Myung Woo Yuh. Also: Fenech-Nelson, TV announcers, boxing's toughest men, Toney-McCallum.

March 1992: *KO* Interview Mike Tyson: An In-Depth, Toe-To-Toe Talk With Boxing's Biggest Star. Color Pinup: Michael Moorer. Also: Thomas Hearns, Tracy Patterson, Larry Holmes, best fighter poll.

May 1992: Division-By-Division Faceoffs: The Best Of '92 vs. The Best Of '67. Color Pinup: James Warring. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Tommy Morrison, Bert Cooper, Gianfranco Rosi.

June 1992: If Not Tyson Or Holyfield, Then Who? Bowe? Moorer? Ruddock? Lewis? Mercer? Color Pinup: James Toney. Interview: Shelly Finkel. Also: Scotty Olson, overrated and underrated fighters, Orlin Norris, Whitaker-Pineda.

July 1992: The Title Reign of Evander Holyfield: A Reason To Hide ... Or A Reason For Pride? Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Julian Jackson. Also: Kelley-Dorsey, Nelson-Fenech, Kennedy McKinney.

Aug. 1992: Bowe Knows The Big Fight: The Top Contender Analyzes Holmes-Holyfield. Color Pinup: Julian Jackson. Interview: Michael Spinks. Also: Thomas Hearns, Blue Horizon, fighting fear, Toney-Barkley, Greg Haugen.

Sept. 1992: Can Tommy Morrison Punch Out The Theory ... White Men Can't Fight. Color Pinup: Welcome Ncita. Interview: Ken Norton. Also: Reggie Johnson, Jimmy Paul, McGirt-Blocker, Ali-Shavers.

Oct. 1992: The Olympics: Golden Memories ... And Golden Futures? Color Pinup: Reggie Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Genaro Hernandez, Terry Norris.

Nov. 1992: Foreman vs. Holmes: The Fight Evander Holyfield Should Have Prevented. Color Pinup: Iran Barkley. Interview: Joey Gamache. Also: Hector Camacho, Tracy Patterson, Rudy Zavala.

Dec. 1992: The Final Four: Ruddock vs. Lewis, Holyfield vs. Bowe. Color Pinup: Genaro Hernandez. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: Whitaker-Pineda, Bowe-Coetzer, Alex Stewart, Gamache-Lopez.

Jan. 1993: Holyfield vs. Bowe: Who Will Win And Why. Color Pinup: Al Cole. Interview: Vinny Pazienza. Also: James Toney, Terrence Alli, Maurice Blocker.

Feb. 1993: Strictly Business: George Foreman Fights For The Love Of It—The Money! Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: George Benton. Also: Tracy Spann, Oba Carr, greatest eras.

March 1993: Not Just Another English Muffin: Lennox Lewis Powers His Way Toward The Title. Color Pinup: Leeonzer Barber. Interview: Emanuel Steward. Also: Reggie Johnson, Lopez-Gamache, USA Network.

May 1993: Recapping The Future: Julio Cesar Chavez' Road To 100-0. Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Junior Jones. Also: Buddy McGirt, Riddick Bowe, Raul Marquez.

Dec. 1993: The *KO* Feud Rages On: "I Will Torture You!" Says Riddick Bowe To Lennox Lewis. Color Pinup: Kennedy McKinney. Also: Mississippi boxing, George Foreman, Yori Boy Campas , Carbajal-Kim, Morrison-Moorer.

June 1995: The Tug-Of-War Over Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Wilfredo Vasquez. Interview: Oliver McCall. Also: Alejandro Gonzalez, Alexis Arguello, Kostya Tszyu.

Sept. 1996: Tyson vs. Seldon. Don't Bet On This Fight Until You've Read This Story! Color Pinup: Arturo Gatti. Interview: Butterbean. Also: Dana Rosenblatt, '92 Olympians, McGuigan-Pedroza.

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Jan. 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Bowe-Golota II: Hatred And Vengeance ... It's A Beautiful Thing! Color Pinup: Johnny Tapia. Interview: Lou Duva. Also: Mouse Strauss, heavyweight rematches, Azumah Nelson.

Feb. 1997: *KO's* 1997 Wish List. Color Pinup: Ike Quartey. Interview: Naseem Hamed. Also: David Tua, Felix Trinidad, Adolpho Washington, Bobby Czyz.

Aug. 1997: Oscar Reaches ... But Can't Grasp The Stars. Color Pinup: Nate Miller. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Norris-Trinidad preview, Hall of Fame, Angel Manfredy.

Nov. 1997: Filling In The Missing Pieces: What "The Bite" Means To Boxing. Color Pinup: Christy Martin. Interview: Jim Lampley. Also: Vince Phillips, British prospects, Iran Barkley.

Holiday 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Holyfield-Moorer II: Can Evander Avenge His Ugliest Defeat? Color Pinup: Vince Phillips. Interview: Mills Lane. Also: Roy Jones, Baby Jake Matlala, Boxing 2000.

Jan. 1998: De La Hoya Humbles The Macho Man: "Oscar's The Best I've Ever Fought." Color Pinup: William Guthrie. Interview: Mark Johnson. Also: Johnny Tapia, Pinklon Thomas, defense.

Feb. 1998: Is Lennox Lewis The World's Best Heavyweight? Color Pinup: Charles Brewer. Interview: Marc Ratner. Also: Otis Grant, Arturo Gatti.

March 1998: Evander Holyfield: For The Real

Deal, Lewis Is No Big Deal. Color Pinup: Lou Del Valle. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: David Izon, Meldrick Taylor, rapid weight loss.

May 1998: Living Up To The Hype: Sometimes They Do ... Sometimes They Don't. Color Pinup: David Reid. Interview: Best Of ... (Part III). Also: Naseem Hamed, Marty Denkin, women's boxing.

June 1998: Lewis vs. Holyfield: Why The Fight Of The Year Isn't Going To Happen. Color Pinup: Evander Holyfield. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Hector Lizarraga, pain, Head-To-Head review.

Aug. 1998: Lewis Bombs Out Briggs: Would The WBC Champ Do This To Holyfield? Color Pinup: Keith Mullings. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Pernell Whitaker, Marco Antonio Barrera, Roberto Garcia.

Sept. 1998: Can Mike Tyson Make A Successful Comeback? Sugar Ray Leonard Has The Answer. Color Pinup: Michael Grant. Interview: Brad Jacobs. Also: Naseem Hamed, Wayne McCullough, Kirk Johnson.

Oct. 1998: The Ultimate Fantasy Card. Color Pinup: Oscar De La Hoya. Interview: Roy Jones. Also: Brendan Ingle, NYPD boxing, prospect blueprint.

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Jan. 2000: Fool's Gold? Trinidad May Have Tarnished Oscar's Image Forever! Color Pinup: Paulie Ayala. Interview: Tony Ayala Jr. Also: David Reid, Johnny Nelson.

Feb. 2000: Breakout 2000: Who's Going To Lead The Way In Y2K? Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Shane Mosley, Wise-Chavez, Iran Barkley.

March 2000: Mike Tyson: "I'm Tired Of This Crap!" So Are We, Mike! Color Pinup: Vernon Forrest. Interview: James Page. Also: Erik Morales & Naseem Hamed, Diego Corrales, women's boxing.

May 2000: Michael Grant vs. Lennox Lewis—25 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Paul Spadafora. Interview: Dan Goossen. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Johnny Tapia, southpaws.

June 2000: Lewis vs. Grant: Who Will Win ... And Why. Color Pinup: Vitali Klitschko. Interview: Sharmba Mitchell. Also: Shane Mosley, David Izon, 2000 Hall of Fame.

July 2000: Today's Fighters, Tomorrow's Hall Of Famers. Color Pinup: Keith Holmes. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Zab Judah, Morales-Barrera, Wayne Braithwaite.

Aug. 2000: Mosley Prepares For Oscar: "It Will Be Like The First Round Of Hagler-Hearns." Color Pinup: Steve Johnston. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Vargas-Quartey, Thomas Hearns, Felix Trinidad, common sense vs. cowardice.

Sept. 2000: Now Vargas Is Ready For Trinidad & De La Hoya. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Trinidad vs. all-time greats, Thomas Hearns, common sense vs. cowardice.

Oct. 2000 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Floyd Mayweather. Interview: Stevie Johnston. Also: Clifford Etienne, over-hyped heavyweights.

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Feb. 2001: Fernando Vargas' Internal Battle: If He Can't Win It, He Can't Beat Trinidad. Interview: Evander Holyfield. Also: Derrick Gainer, Roy Jones, Naseem Hamed.

April 2001: Lewis Is Too Much For Tua ... But Could Tyson Do Any Better? Interview: Max Kellerman. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Wladimir Klitschko.

June 2001: Trinidad-Jones: Superfight Or Mismatch? Interview: Virgil Hill. Also: Mayweather-Corrales, Paul Ingle, Davey Hilton, Tyson's relationship with Vargas, Judah, and Mayweather.

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Dec. 2001: Laila Ali: The Fighter, The Sex Symbol ... The Future Of Women's Boxing? Interview: Laila Ali. Also: Oscar De La Hoya, Tim Austin, Manny Pacquiao, Hector Camacho Jr.

Feb. 2002: Bernard Hopkins: "I Am The American Dream. I Am The American Story." Interview: Wladimir Klitschko. Also: Omar Sheika, Vernon Forrest, Juan Lazcano.

April 2002: After Hitting Rock Bottom ... Lennox Is Back On The Path To Greatness. Interview: Duva Boxing. Also: Zab Judah, Mike Tyson, Thomas Tate.

June 2002: Tyson vs. Lewis: 10-Page Preview & Analysis. Interview: Jameel McCline. Also: *Ali* movie, Dorin vs. Balbi & Ward vs. Leija.

Aug. 2002: Still Crazy After All These Years: Should Mike Tyson Be Allowed To Fight? Interview: Kostya Tszyu. Also: Barrera-Morales II preview, Ayala-Adams, Ricky Hatton.

Oct. 2002: Vernon Forrest vs. Shane Mosley: Two Careers On The Line! Interview: Fernando Vargas. Also: Mayweather-Castillo, Hopkins vs. all-time greats, heavyweight scrap heap.

Dec. 2002: Wladimir Klitschko: Would He Be Too Much For Lennox? Interview: Joe Calzaghe. Also: Barrera-Morales II, Evander Holyfield, Freddie Roach.

Winter 2002: A Realistic Look At Tyson's Comeback: He Can't Make History, But He Can Make Millions. Interview: Micky Ward. Also: Antonio Tarver, Antwun Echols, Acelino Freitas.

March 2003: Oscar De La Hoya—The War That Rages Within. Interview: Klitschko brothers. Also: Kassim Ouma, Eric Morel, holiday gifts.

May 2003: Danger Zone! Will Roy Jones Be Doomed By His Heavyweight Ego? Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Gatti-Ward II, Floyd Mayweather, Erik Morales.

July 2003: Boxing's Biggest X-Factor: Can Hopkins Recover From His Self-Inflicted Wounds? Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Kostya Tszyu, DaVarryl Williamson, 10 best defensive fighters.

Sept. 2003: Sugar Roy? How Jones Rates With The All-Time Greats. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Corrie Sanders, Jean-Marc Mormeck, Kermit Cintron.

Nov. 2003: De La Hoya-Mosley II: Will Three Years And Seven Pounds Make A Difference? Interview: James Toney. Also: Michael Watson, Erik Morales, Jones-Holyfield head-to-head.

Winter 2003: *KO* Interview Arturo Gatti: "Kostya Tszyu Needs Me More Than I Need Him." Also: Mayorga-Forrest II, Zab Judah, Corrales-Casamayor preview, Joe Calzaghe.

Feb. 2004: Shane Mosley: A Second Chance At Superstardom. Interview: Bernard Hopkins. Also: Laila Ali, Scott LeDoux, retirement.

April 2004: Human After All: Tarver Makes Jones Turn To Tyson. Interview: Emanuel Steward. Also: Sharmba Mitchell, Toney-McCline preview, trash-talking.

June 2004: What Could Tyson Do To Jones? Interview: Antonio Tarver. Also: Bernard Hopkins, Spinks-Mayorga.

Oct. 2004: Dr. Klitschko: The Perfect Band-Aid For The Heavyweight Division. Interview: Diego Corrales. Also: Monte Barrett, Cory Spinks, Vinny Paz & Sven Ottke.

Feb. 2005: Exclusive KO Interview—Manny Pacquiao. Also: Kostya Tszyu, Manning Galloway, quitting, perfect heavyweight.

June 2005: Heavyweight Champ Vitali Klitschko: He's A Lot Better Than You Think! Interview: John Ruiz & Norman Stone. Also: Glen Johnson, 2004 in review.

Oct. 2005: El Feroz With A Twist: Re-tooled Vargas Gets Defensive. Interview: Zab Judah. Also: Marco Antonio Barrera, Jean-Marc Mormeck, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., *KO* at 25.

Feb. 2006: Can Hip Hop Revitalize Boxing? Interview: Erik Morales. Also: Zab Judah, Ricardo Mayorga, Arturo Gatti, Luis Collazo, Roman Karmazin.

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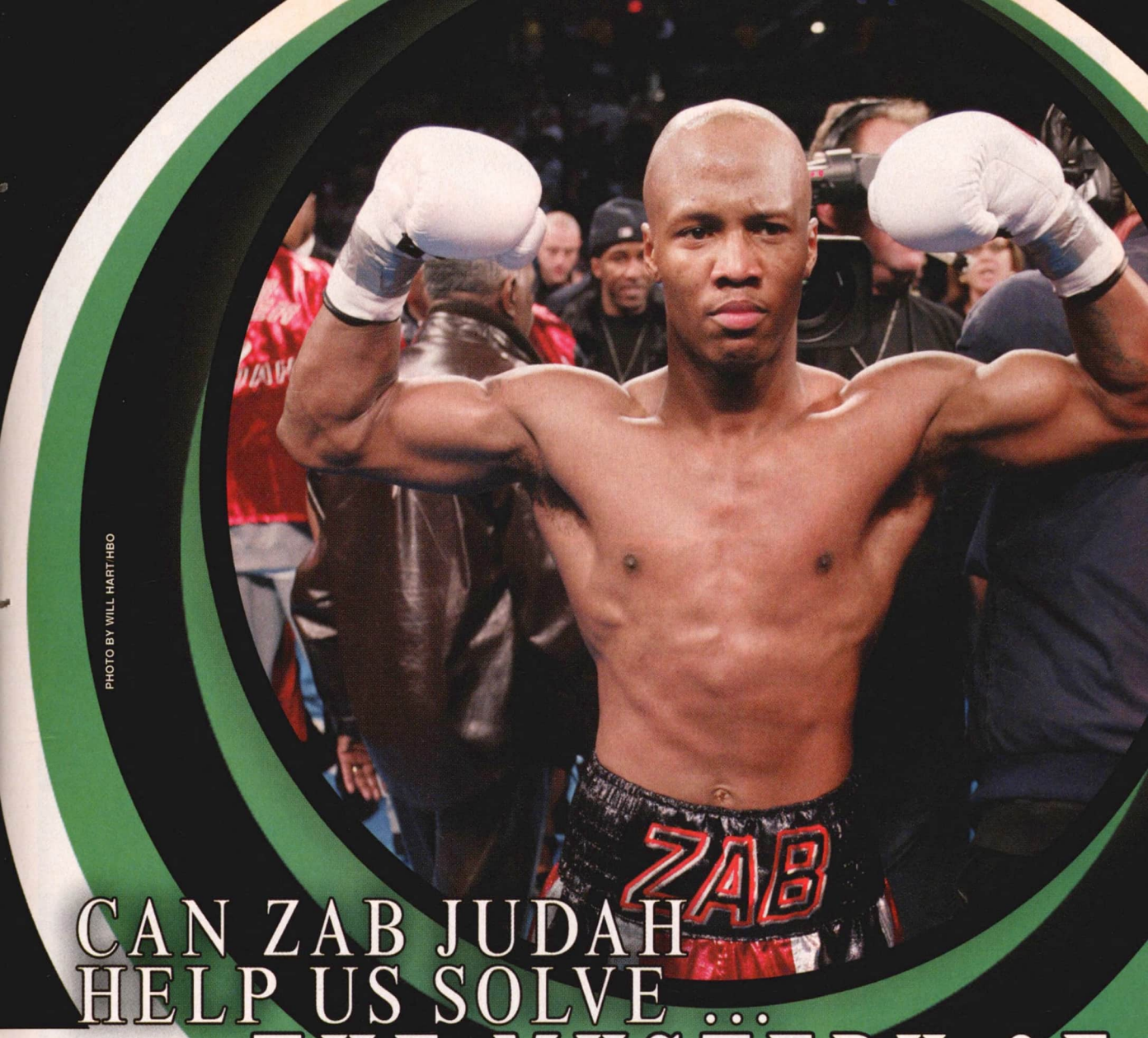

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CAN ZAB JUDAH HELP US SOLVE ... THE MYSTERY OF MIGUEL COTTO?

By Eric Raskin

In the modern boxing game, it's almost unheard of to reach star status, to be headlining on HBO, and even be testing the pay-per-view waters, without someone trying to hang a nickname on you. It's a fundamental marketing tool, and whether the nickname works perfectly ("The Golden Boy," "The Real Deal") or completely fails to

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Cotto drives a thunderous left hook into Urkal's belly en route to an 11th-round TKO. The popular Puerto Rican, who is one of the very best bodypunchers in the business, won virtually every round, but couldn't put his tough and cagey German opponent on the deck.

stick (remember attempts to label Lennox Lewis "Double-L" or "The Lion"?), an attempt is invariably made. But six years and 29 fights into his pro career, Miguel Cotto is still just plain old Miguel Cotto. Nobody's tried calling him "The Puerto Rican Punisher." Or "The Body-Blasting Boricua." Or just something simple and vaguely meaningless like Miguel "The Monster" Cotto. In Michael Buffer's ring introductions, he remains just *"Miguellllll Coooo-tooooo."*

But here's one that we think fits him just fine, and provides some alliteration with his first name to boot: Miguel "El Misterio" Cotto. You don't need to have taken Spanish in high school to know that translates as "The Mystery." Frankly, "El Incertidumbre" would probably be more accurate—it means "The Uncertainty"—but that would have to rank as the least catchy nickname of all-time. So "El Misterio" it is. And it applies because, after six years and 29 fights, after he's won alphabet belts in two weight classes, we still don't know much about how good Cotto is. Is he a future pound-for-pound king? Maybe. Is he a string of knockout losses waiting to happen? Maybe. Because of the way he's been matched, especially in his last four

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Ever since Ricardo Torres floored and badly hurt Cotto in their September 2005 thriller, the Puerto Rican has faced relatively light punchers. Critics wonder if it's coincidence or safety-first matchmaking.

fights since a serious scare against Ricardo Torres in September '05, we just don't know.

Cotto was dropped for the only time in his pro career in the second round of the Torres fight, and was all but out on his feet for a stretch in the fifth round. Coupled with his wobbly moments against DeMarcus Corley two fights earlier, the word "chinny" started getting liberal usage. So in his next fight, Cotto faced the modest-punching Gianluca Branco. Then it was Paulie Malignaggi, a slick boxer with five knockouts in 21 previous fights. Then Cotto moved up from 140 to 147 pounds and faced Carlos Quintana, who, despite a glossy kayo percentage, is really more boxer than puncher. And on March 3 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Cotto faced Oktay Urkal, a light hitter who'd fought almost his entire career at junior welterweight. That Urkal's first name is only one letter removed from the word "okay" seems perfectly appropriate.

Cotto won all four fights—some more impressively than others—but no questions about his ability to take a punch have been answered. He remains a 29-0 (24) mystery, a brilliant bodypuncher shrouded in uncertainty.

Enter Zab Judah. After original opponent Antonio Margarito had second thoughts about being Cotto's June 9 Madison Square Garden punch partner, Judah got the call. Without a doubt, Judah possesses real knockout power. He's also one of the fastest fighters, pound-for-pound, in the sport. So is he the dangerous test that we've been waiting for, the man who will reveal whether or not Cotto is a legend-in-the-making? Or is Judah, 34-4 (25) with 1 no-contest, the loser of two straight and owner of a shaky chin of his own (not to mention a shaky heart), a step-up in name only?

"I think it will be accepted by the media as some kind of a test, because Cotto really hasn't met the elite fighters yet, six years into his career," said HBO analyst Larry Merchant. "Not that Judah is an elite fighter, but given who he's fought recently, the case can be made that this is part of Cotto's trajectory, a fight that will provide insights as to whether he's going up or down. It certainly doesn't hurt him if he wins, and it probably, for whatever reason, will give him a little extra credibility as one of the next big things in boxing if he wins decisively."

As Merchant pointed out on the Cotto-Urkal broadcast, comparisons between Cotto and the last Puerto Rican great, Felix Trinidad, are somewhat unjustified given how much more slowly Cotto has been moved. At 26, Cotto's current age, Trinidad had already beaten Pernell Whitaker, Hector Camacho, Oscar De La Hoya, Yory Boy Campas, and Oba Carr—hanging the first career loss on the latter three. "Tito" had enjoyed a six-year reign as a welterweight beltholder, making 15 defenses, and was ranked in everybody's pound-for-pound top five.

Cotto has faced his share of quality fighters, but still doesn't have anyone on his resume even as highly regarded as Campas or Carr were at the time Trinidad beat them. He took on solid veteran John Brown in his 12th pro fight, ex-titleholder Cesar Bazan in his 14th bout, and, starting with his 18th fight, faced this non-stop string of quality opponents: Carlos Maussa, Victoriano Sosa, Lovemore Ndou, Kelson Pinto, Randall Bailey, Corley, Muhammad Abdullaev, Torres,

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

The dirty stuff almost got out of hand in the 10th-round when Cotto picked up Urkal and appeared ready to bodyslam him to the mat. Both were guilty of rule violations, but only Urkal was penalized by Puerto Rican referee Luis Pabon.

Branco, Malignaggi, Quintana, and Urkal. Almost every last one of them has been ranked in THE RING'S top 10 at some point in their careers. None were total pushovers, and none were really over the hill. But none qualify as A-level opponents either. Cotto certainly hasn't been matched weak, but when there's a reasonable debate over whether your best opponent was Carlos Quintana, Ricardo Torres, Muhammad Abdullaev, or Lovemore Ndou, then you haven't been matched all that tough either.

Relative to that crew, Judah is a huge step up in terms of name value. While no one on Cotto's current resume has ever cracked the pound-for-pound top 50, Judah has knocked on the door of the top 10 a couple of times in his career. If you're looking at this as an extremely dangerous matchup for Cotto, it's because Judah has undeniable talent. He has that envied combination of spectacular speed and power, plus he's a southpaw. He's talented enough that, for four rounds, when physical gifts were enough and mental acumen wasn't yet coming into the equation, he was building a lead last April against Floyd Mayweather. Cotto doesn't have Judah's speed—not even close—and though he's faced lefties, guys with better speed than him, and guys with one-punch power (though not since Torres), the Puerto Rican has never faced anyone with *all three* qualities.

But that's only half of the picture with Judah. He doesn't take a punch especially well. If Plan A isn't working, he tends not to adjust, and when Plan A *is* working and his opponent *does* adjust, as Mayweather and Carlos Baldomir did, he doesn't readjust. In any fight lasting more than a few rounds, he suffers lapses of concentration. And when things aren't going his way, he either goes into a shell and stops fighting back (as in the second half of his fight against Baldomir) or he fights back in the form of dirty tactics (as in the 10th round of his fight with Mayweather, or against referee Jay Nady after his fight with Kostya Tszyu was stopped). Judah, 29, isn't the come-from-behind-to-win type—or at least he hasn't been since 2000, when he got off the deck to stop Jan Bergman and Terronn Millett. He's the classic frontrunner.

Judah raised eyebrows when, after Cotto's victory over Urkal, he told a small gathering of media in Puerto Rico that he'd been out for a run with Trinidad and Tito told him that he'd knock out Cotto in four rounds. Whether Trinidad actually said that or not, this much is true: *If* Judah is going to beat Cotto, those first four rounds represent his best chance to do it. Rounds five through 12 are not traditionally Judah's time to shine.

"If there's an edge that Cotto has, it's that he can win early and he can win late. And the assumption is, off of his past performances, that Judah's best chance is early," Merchant agreed. "Cotto's people may feel this is a safe fight, that Judah's name exceeds his reality. Certainly, he's a harder puncher than anyone Cotto has fought recently. But maybe his flaws make that chance worth taking.

"I've always felt that the management will tell you what they think of a fighter by how they match him, rather than by what they say. If his own management has decided to keep him away from anybody who can punch hard, are they just being normally cautious or do they know something we don't? And is he stronger and healthier and able to take a punch better at welterweight than at junior welter? That's what we all want to find out, and maybe Judah will give us a better indication than the last couple of opponents."

Cotto's promoter, Bob Arum, disputes the notion that matching his burgeoning star against guys without anvils in their gloves was a carefully mapped-out plan.

"We fought Malignaggi because it was in New York, Quintana was supposed to be a boxer-puncher and we had to fight him to get the title, and we had to fight Urkal because he stood aside and let us fight Quintana," Arum said, shifting some of the blame to the WBA, though we all know the alphabet groups couldn't tell anybody who to fight if not for fighters and promoters playing ball with them.

"So there was no design at all regarding punchers or non-punchers," Arum continued. "And we were ready to fight Margarito, who's definitely a puncher. And Judah is a dangerous puncher too. It's very dangerous, the guy is fast as hell, he punches really good, but if Miguel is going to be the best in the world, he has to fight top-echelon fighters like Judah."

Without a doubt, Cotto does have to fight top-echelon fighters if he's going to reach the next plateau, crack the P-4-P lists, and justify the Trinidad comparisons. It's the "like Judah" part of Arum's statement that we aren't so sure about. Is Judah a top-echelon fighter? Or is he just a guy we *thought* would be a top-echelon fighter who turned out to have too many flaws to earn that distinction?

Apparently, Cotto isn't the only fighter coming into this matchup with major question marks swirling around him. Maybe Judah will reveal whether or not Cotto has the goods ... and maybe along the way, Cotto will tell us something about Judah. Just as this is Cotto's best chance yet to prove himself, it probably doubles as Judah's *last* chance to prove himself.

And with stakes like that, this fight, despite being a comedown from Cotto-Margarito, might prove plenty interesting in its own right. ■

Cotto *A Cut* Above Urkal

SanJuan, Puerto Rico:

Late in the fifth round of his fight with Urkal at Roberto Clemente Coliseum in front of 8,950 fans, Cotto's head clashed with the German challenger's, and Cotto came away with a cut on his left eyelid. In boxing, even against non-threatening opponents, trouble is never more than an accidental butt away, and Urkal's head left the Puerto Rican Day parade weekend pay-per-view showdown between Cotto and Zab Judah in a bit of peril. Fortunately for Cotto, Judah, and all other parties financially involved, Urkal's fists presented no peril whatsoever, and one minute and one second into the 11th round of a wholly one-sided fight, Urkal's trainer Ulli Wegner, frustrated with referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) and fully aware that the outcome of the fight was decided, threw in the towel.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Wegner decides he's seen enough

Urkal, 146, Berlin, Germany, was never really in the fight, but he was tough and crafty and capable of making Cotto, 147, Caguas, Puerto Rico, work hard. Cotto's two primary weapons in the bout were a nice left jab intended to force Urkal's guard up, and a vicious bodyattack that pounded Urkal's ribs whenever they were exposed. Cotto put on a bodypunching clinic in the second and third rounds, and the highly educated pro-Cotto crowd showed its appreciation for the gutshots with even more volume than when Cotto scored to the head. To Urkal's credit, whenever hit he tried to fire back, but Cotto always got the better of exchanges. Late in the fourth round a right to the body almost folded the 37-year-old Urkal in half, and a big left uppercut crashed into his jaw just before the bell.

At the end of four rounds, because the Puerto Rico commission chose to use open scoring, three tallies of 40-36 in favor of Cotto were announced. Cotto won round five too, but the head clash gave Urkal a glimmer of hope.

"My cut made him feel brave," Cotto said. "The headbutts bothered me. I don't know if they were intentional or not, but they bothered me. I also had blood trickling in my eye."

Urkal was warned for leading with his head in the sixth, and late in the round the fighters exchanged cheap shots in close as the foul play escalated. Urkal was penalized a point in round seven for again using his head, but for the first time in the fight, he enjoyed a round in which, according to CompuBox, he outlanded Cotto (though Cotto's harder shots arguably still carried the round). In the eighth, Urkal did his most effective work of the fight, and Cotto, losing his patience due to the head clashes, hit Urkal with a dirty punch in the lower back late in the round. Referee Pabon failed to even warn Cotto for the infraction, so Urkal retaliated with an intentional-looking headbutt at the bell.

In the ninth, the punches became the story again, Cotto wobbling Urkal with a left hook early and then landing a tremendous left uppercut. But in the 10th, the battle returned to its dirty form, as Urkal had Cotto's head under his arm in a clinch and Cotto lifted his opponent in the air, performing the first half of a bodyslam before letting him down relatively gently.

A determined Cotto came out in round 11 looking for the stoppage, and he got it—though not in the way he'd intended. Urkal, 38-4 (11), lost another point for leading with his head, and Wegner immediately climbed on the apron and waved the towel in the air, knowing full well thanks to the open scoring that his fighter couldn't win on the cards.

"He had enough," Wegner said. "I wasn't going to let him take any more punches to the back. They weren't bodyshots. He was getting hit in the back. It was wrong." Other than the one in round eight, they looked like legal bodyshots to us. But Wegner's general frustration with Pabon was perfectly justifiable.

A couple of days after the fight, it was revealed that, because of his cut, Cotto wouldn't be allowed to spar for 45 days. But that still allows him up to seven weeks of sparring prior to the Judah fight, meaning the June 9 date won't be affected.

—E.R.

O, CANADA

Boxing's Resurgence In The Great White North

By Paul Salgado

Canadians have always reserved their utmost passion for hockey, but in recent years, at least one province has developed fervor for its newly thriving boxing culture as well. Of four Canadian fighters currently rated in THE RING's world rankings, only one, super bantamweight Steve Molitor, fights outside of Quebec, where the sport is currently on fire. But this is nothing new for Canada, where division is often thought of as the norm. Described as "Two Solitudes," it has always been believed a divide exists between

PHOTO BY MATTHEW LEWIS/GETTY IMAGES (

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Canada's Herman Ngoudjo caught the eye of a lot of U.S. fans when he gave Jose Luis Castillo a very tough battle on a January 2007 HBO card (opposite page). Even though he lost the decision, Ngoudjo's showing was good enough for him to join Paul Molitor (left) as one of four Canadians currently ranked by THE RING.

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/SPORTZFRAME

Unlikely hero Eric Lucas has helped revitalize Canadian boxing, first when he won WBC super middleweight title in 2001 and then as a promoter following his retirement from the ring.

Francophone Quebec and the nation's English-speaking provinces. Now another Two Solitudes has emerged in the country: that of boxing in Quebec, and boxing in the rest of Canada.

Quebec hosted 34 professional boxing cards in 2005, one card less than the world's fight capital, Las Vegas. In 2006, there were 28 fight cards compared to just four in Ontario, where the sport is all but extinct. Although a hotbed for the last several years, the Quebec fight scene has probably been the best-kept secret in the sport—until recently.

Things changed in January, when little-known junior welterweight Hermann Ngoudjo came close to outpointing Mexican powerhouse Jose Luis Castillo on HBO, nearly derailing Castillo's pending big-money showdown with Ricky Hatton. The rest of the boxing world may have been surprised by Ngoudjo's display of grit and finesse, but boxing fans in Canada who watched him regularly on the French-language network TVA definitely weren't.

"I didn't necessarily pick him to upset Castillo, but I knew his performance was going to be one where people said: 'Wow, this kid can fight,' and that's exactly what happened!" said Russ Anber, host of the weekly boxing news show *In This Corner* on TSN, Canada's cable sports channel. Anber covers current events in boxing globally, but he's scrupulous about keeping fans abreast of his country's emerging talent, including Ngoudjo, 15-1 (9), and Molitor, along with rated fighters Lucian Bute, Adrian Diaconu, and Joachim Alcine.

There has always been an affinity for prizefighting in Quebec, where throughout the 1980s and '90s the legendary Hilton brothers, Mathew, Davey, and Alex, were enormously popular and it was not uncommon to have 20,000 attend their fights at the Montreal Forum.

But the sport's current success can be traced back to Montreal businessman Hans-Karl Muhlegg's idea to finance the promotional outfit Interbox in 1997. Muhlegg envisioned a world-class boxing enterprise that would develop a roster of young talent, with the expectation that several would emerge as championship material. Few expected it would be super middleweight Eric Lucas, a modestly skilled workhorse, who would be the first to capture a title for Interbox in '01 by stopping Britain's Glenn Catley to win the vacant WBC belt. One year later, lightweight Leonard Dorin would

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/SPORTZFRAME

Undefeated super middleweight contender Lucian Bute drills James Obede Toney with a potent right en route to an eighth-round knockout victory in September 2006. Bute's management team is pushing for a spot on either HBO or Showtime in order to raise his profile outside of Canada.

wind up its second beltholder, when he snared the WBA strap with a 12-round decision over Raul Balbi. The affable Lucas proved a hit with the Montreal fans with his title fights at the Bell Centre, home to the Montreal Canadiens, attracting crowds numbering 7,000 to 9,000. Meanwhile, Bute, Ngoudjo, Alcine, Diaconu, and Molitor were developing in supporting bouts underneath Lucas, positioning themselves to become the next generation of stars.

After Lucas and Dorin lost their belts, Muhlegg placed Interbox in receivership in '04 amid mounting debt. But Lucas, still seeing potential for success, took up its reins. At the same time, Interbox's former general manager, Yvon Michel, founded GYM (Groupe Yvon Michel) and began running a series of smaller shows featuring a combacking Otis Grant. The younger talent pool divided itself between the two promotional concerns, and ever since, fans have benefited from a busy fight scene.

Today, Interbox continues to promote several major fight nights each year at the Bell Centre that amount to sheer spectacle. Shows now feature rock concerts prior to main bouts featuring Bute, THE RING's sixth-ranked 168-pounder, and Diaconu. Fan support has rivaled the numbers once enjoyed by Lucas.

"Really, it was Eric's idea," said Interbox Operations Director and head trainer Stephane Larouche. "He said he wanted to do something special with the show that people will remember, and come back because of it. And that worked out, which is the music part of the evening.

"Number two, he said we don't need many guys. But let's get quality guys that we can get to the top, and get them ranked. And that's what we did. Basically, all the guys we signed are in Eric's image: consistent, hard-working athletes who are always in the gym and passionate."

A voluminous puncher and active mover, Bute's wins over James Obed Toney and Sergey Tatevosyan made '06 a breakout year for the super middleweight. Now 19-0 (16), the Romanian expatriate has proven popular with Montreal fans, and with his recent high standing in every sanctioning bodies' ratings, a shot at one of the paper crowns is virtually assured. But Larouche has expressed patience about moving his charge, and instead hopes to boost Bute's name recognition outside Canada with a high-profile bout on one of the major U.S. cable outlets, HBO or Showtime.

Light heavyweight Diaconu has similarly been lined up for a major bout, and could face Chad Dawson, should he successfully have beaten Rico Hoye by the time this magazine is in print. A powerful, broad-punching fireplug, Diaconu, 23-0 (14), stands only 5'9" and has found rangy boxers occasionally troublesome, but an industrious work rate and heavy hands have so far proven to be his equalizers.

"There are some aspects of his game that can improve, but he has speed and strength and can deliver power with both hands," said Larouche. "He's also enthusiastic and likes to give people a show. He won't jeopardize a win, but he will do everything to leave the fans crazy about him."

Meanwhile, GYM has guided both Alcine and Ngoudjo by adopting strategy vastly different from the Interbox model. The key to GYM's success has been its relationship with TVA. Michel has shrewdly leveraged his ties to the network to gain corporate sponsorship from Budweiser, while staging shows in the province's casinos as often as twice a month. Given the arrangement, GYM's fighters are constantly active and receive enormous exposure with 400,000 fans watching the Saturday afternoon broadcasts in Quebec and through affiliates in Ontario.

GYM managed another minor coup last June when Alcine was featured on ESPN2 in a title eliminator against Argentine Javier Alberto Mamani at Montreal's Uniprix Stadium. Stylish southpaw Alcine, 28-0 (19), was rattled early, but recovered to take control of the bout, dominating impressively. The win landed Alcine an April 3 date

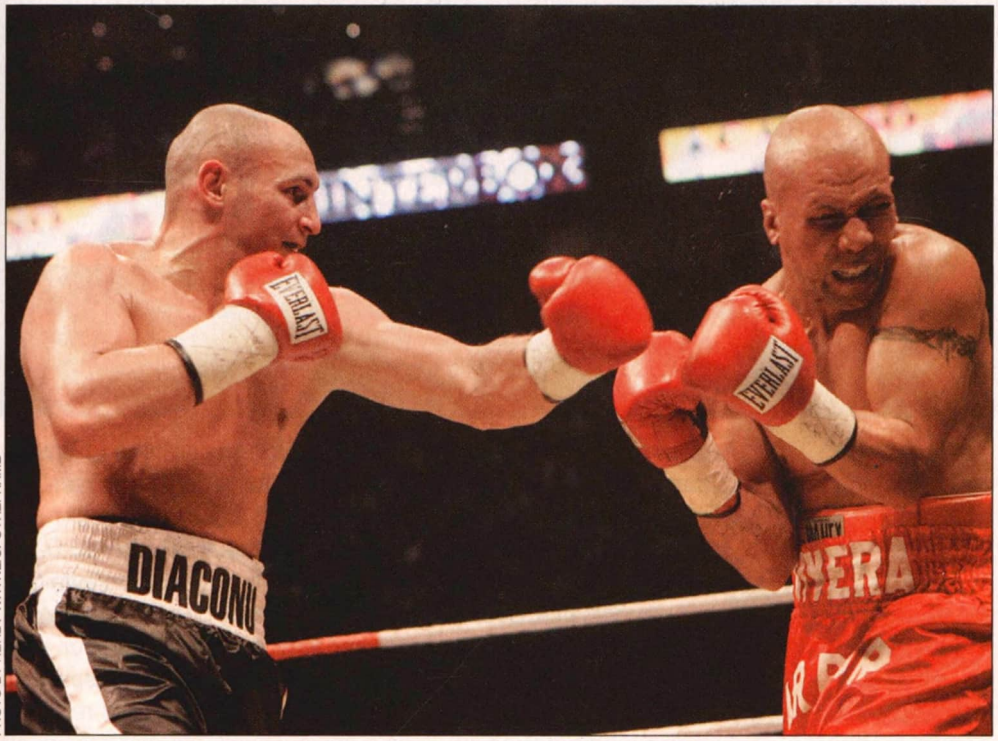


PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/SPOTRZFRAME

Adrian Diaconu on the attack against Orlando Rivera during a September 2006 bout in Montreal. The unbeaten light heavyweight was scheduled to fight Rico Hoy in late-March with the winner to get a crack at the WBC title.

The 10 Greatest Canadian Fighters Of All-Time

How does one make this list? Well, there are three basic criteria: The boxer had to be born on Canadian soil, he can no longer be active, and his ring accomplishments had to eclipse his talent. A heavier weighting was also given to owners of linear belts. So, while most Canadians consider Lennox Lewis one of their own, Lewis was, in fact, born in England and therefore not eligible for the list. Fighters such as the Hilton brothers may have been recognized talents, but they squandered their gifts and never really had careers reflecting their ability.

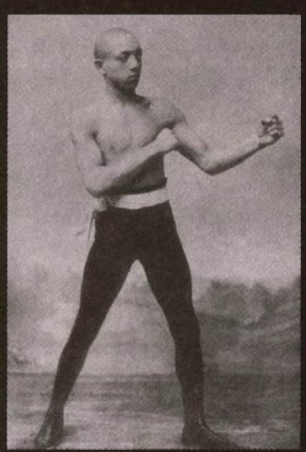
1. George Dixon: A fast, slick defensive boxer, Dixon was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and was the first ever black boxing champion and first Canadian to ever win a world crown. "Little Chocolate" won the world bantamweight crown in 1890 and captured the featherweight title two years later. He was enshrined in the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1990.

2. Sam Langford: Nova Scotia's Langford is famously known as the greatest fighter to never win a world title and was considered by RING founder Nat Fleischer to be one of the 10 best heavyweight fighters who ever lived. Enshrined in the IBHOF in 1990.

3. Jack Delaney: French-Canadian Delaney was a fluid light heavyweight stylist who beat Tommy Loughran, Tiger Flowers, Maxie Rosenbloom, and Mike McTigue before taking the crown from Paul Berlenbach in 1926. Inducted into the IBHOF in 1996.

4. Tommy Burns: Somewhat under-appreciated, the 5'7" Burns was short but quick-fisted, and defended the heavyweight championship 11 times after upsetting Marvin Hart for the belt in 1906. Elected to the IBHOF in 1996.

5. Lou Brouillard: Born in Ste Eugene, Quebec, barrel-chested southpaw Brouillard won the welterweight title from Jack Thompson in 1931 and the defeated Ben Jeby for the New York and National Boxing Association (NBA) middleweight crowns in '33. Entered the IBHOF in 2006.



George Dixon: Canada's greatest

6. "Mysterious" Billy Smith: Brawling two-time welterweight champion Smith was regarded as one of the dirtiest fighters of all-time, but had an extraordinary career in which he beat Joe Walcott and Kid Lavigne. Born in Digby County, Nova Scotia, Smith kayoed Danny Needham for the title in 1892 and lost it to arch-rival Tommy Ryan two years later. He reclaimed the belt in 1898 over Matty Mathews, only to lose it back to Mathews two years later.

7. Johnny Coulon: Toronto-born Coulon won the vacant bantamweight title in 1910 by defeating Jim Kendrick and defended it five times before a stoppage loss to Kid Williams in 1914. Elected to the IBHOF in 1999.

8. George Chuvalo: The Toronto native fought during the golden age of heavyweights and is best known for an anvil chin that earned him a pair of distance losses to Muhammad Ali. But Chuvalo could really fight and was good enough to kayo Jerry Quarry in '69.

9. Jackie Callura: Hamilton, Ontario's Callura won the NBA featherweight title in 1943 from Jackie Wilson and defended the belt two times before losing to Phil Terranova the same year.

10. Eric Lucas: Lucas may not have been the most talented fighter to emerge from Canada, but he was certainly among its most disciplined and determined. The pride of Quebec, Lucas knocked out Glenn Catley in '01 to earn the WBC super middleweight belt, and defended it three times before losing a questionable decision to Germany's Markus Beyer.

—P.S.

against WBC beltholder Travis Simms, who a month earlier was said to have told his promoter, Don King, he will not make the defense in Montreal despite the certainty of a huge gate.

"Alcine is a beautiful boxer," says Anber. "He treats the sport with respect and trains hard. And on any given night, he can win a world title."

Alcine's stablemate, Jean Pascal, left some unconvinced after difficult journeymen Darnell Boone extended him on the June card, although the 15-0 (12) Pascal has hair-trigger speed that would make Roy Jones proud. An inability to dispatch Boone frustrated the 24-year-old, who reduced his game to showboating. But that fight notwithstanding, Pascal has an exceptional combination of skill and power and leads the pack among an impressive group of young talent poised for recognition over the next few years.

Right now, the most excited buzz centers around super middleweight Adonis Stevenson, 5-0 (5), a compact puncher with debilitating power that sometimes leaves crowds gasping in disbelief. Stevenson's defense requires some improvement, but at 29 years of age, he is likely to be moved quickly.

PHOTO BY HERBY WHYNE/SPOTRZFRAME

Another bright Canadian prospect is junior middleweight Joachim Alcine, pictured on his way to a 12-round decision over Javier Alberto Mamani. The stylish southpaw has streaked to 28 consecutive victories as a pro.

Among other prospects, former Canadian amateur standout Sebastien Gauthier is only 10-0 (8), but Interbox has already negotiated the 24-year-old bantamweight into the top 10 of at least one alphabet body, while undefeated stablemate Jean Francois Bergeron, 26-0 (19), is still patiently waiting for a breakout fight after the heavyweight was dropped from consideration as an opponent for Nicolay Valuev earlier this year. GYM also promotes 6'6" heavyweight behemoth David Cadieux, 15-1 (10), who is showing promise, having recently earned a solid points victory over faded journeyman Ross Purity.

As recognition continues to grow for Canada's top fighters, so too will appreciation for its A-list trainers. Michel counts Larouche, who trains Bute and Diaconu, as one of best: "He's a trainer who has earned his reputation based on his past work with champions Lucas and Dorin," said Michel.

Howard Grant, Otis' brother, has also won praise for his development of Alcine and Ngoudjo. Former lightweight contender Grant is known for being a strict perfectionist and is slow to accord his boxers high marks.

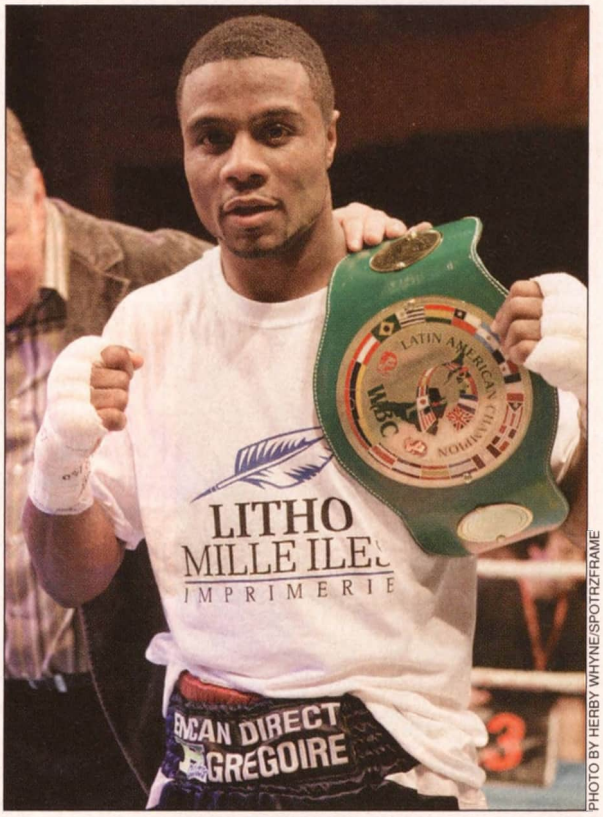
"Howard Grant is making a mark as a premier trainer," said Anber. "The way he trains Ngoudjo and Alcine, there are a lot of similarities to the way he boxed. He has the hands-on approach."

Meanwhile, newly crowned Molitor, 23-0 (9), appears to be benefiting from training with another burgeoning taskmaster in former light heavyweight contender Chris Johnson. A superlative technician, Molitor is often looked at as an anomalous talent for Canada with uncommon athletic prowess. While, in part it may be true, Toronto promoter Jim Gentle, of Stele Promotions, believes Molitor, like his Quebec counterparts, has largely succeeded due to funding that allows him to stay in the gym full-time.

"Molitor was allowed a certain manner of lifestyle that allowed him to train entirely as a boxer, and that arrangement is unique almost anywhere in the boxing community," said Gentle. "It allowed Steve to keep fit and focused. Every day that he woke up, he was a boxer. A lot of credit for his success has to do with his committed management. Steve brought his end of the bargain by staying sharp, staying fit, and staying true to his craft."

Orion Sports Management, Molitor's braintrust, drew heavy criticism for his lack of activity in '06, but were somewhat vindicated after his five-round annihilation of England's Michael Hunter to win the IBF belt. That Molitor had to travel to Hunter's hometown of Hartlepool to accomplish the task was more fuel for critics who feel he deserves more home-based recognition. More recently, Molitor, manager James Jardine, and promoter Allan Tremblay of Orion, have been named in a $10-million lawsuit filed by a New Jersey promoter One More Round Enterprises, which has alleged a breach of a 2005 promotional contract.

Gentle, who has featured Molitor on several cards in the Toronto area, is all too aware of the vagaries involved in hosting shows in the Ontario. Among other drawbacks, the promoter cites unions, disinterest from casinos, and major league franchises competing for the attention and discretionary entertainment dollars of fans. Ontario's athletic commission is also notoriously rigid, compared to



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Speedy super middleweight Jean Pascal is yet another unbeaten Canadian looking to make an impact on the international scene.

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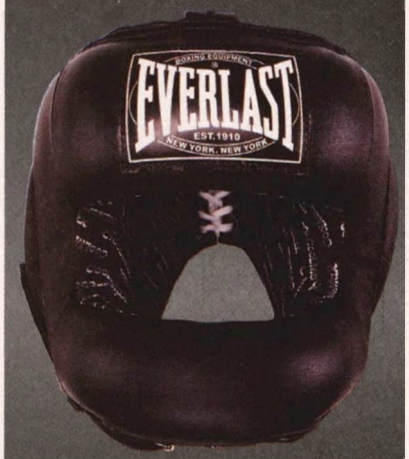

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Quebec, where commissioner Mario Latraverse has a reputation for working with promoters to make the sport safe and viable. Gentle says Stele Promotions can reliably attract 1,500 fans to any of its shows, but sees mainstream media indifference as key to the sport's lagging popularity outside Quebec, noting that Molitor's career was given dismal major media coverage until his fight with Hunter.

GYM's Michel has a different take on why boxing sometimes suffers in the press: "It's the promoter's job to get the media interested. We as promoters need to educate them about the sport."

PHOTO BY MATTHEW LEWIS/GETTY IMAGES

Molitor shows his skill penetrating Michael Hunter's guard with a left uppercut en route to a fifth-round kayo and the IBF super bantam belt. The victory finally garnered Molitor some long-overdue media attention in his hometown of Toronto.

But it could also be that the media is reflecting an unspoken mindset held by many Canadian fans. As Anber points out, Quebecers believe their athletes are as good as any in the world, whereas the rest of Canada seems to suffer from a prevailing inferiority complex—save for its hockey players—believing real talent must leave the country (usually to the U.S.) to become truly world class. An Olympic gold medalist for Canada, Lennox Lewis, who was born in England but grew up in Kitchener, Ontario, illustrates the point perfectly. Canadians still embrace Lewis as one of their own, but few think he would have been heavyweight champion had he remained in the country.

Still, lack of media interest in Canada seems difficult to reconcile given other evidence of boxing's appeal. In western Canada, Alberta hosted 10 club-level cards in '06, mostly built on a dedicated following for female boxer Jelena Mrdjenovic. With its booming oil economy and dearth of sports alternatives outside its two NHL franchises, popularity for boxing in Alberta could continue to grow. And Anber's show, launched in '05 to fill a programming void left by the NHL lockout, consistently attracts more than 100,000 viewers despite its revolving time slot. TSN also stepped up purchases of HBO, Showtime, and ESPN fight cards during the lockout. To their surprise, boxing proved a ratings grabber, and still remains in high rotation on the network.

Unfortunately, the NHL lockout failed to expand the fan base for live boxing in Ontario, where Gentle saw no improved attendance at his cards: "Sadly," he said, "what I discovered is in the absence of hockey, hockey fans like to *talk* about hockey."

Nonetheless, Gentle remains perseverant. Given Molitor's recent success and talk that he could make a title defense in Ontario sometime in the near future, the promoter believes interest in the sport could develop momentum.

Until then, *c'est la vie*. It may stand alone in its passion for boxing, but at least Canadian fans have Quebec. ■

Paul Salgado is a Toronto-based journalist and contributor to THE RING.

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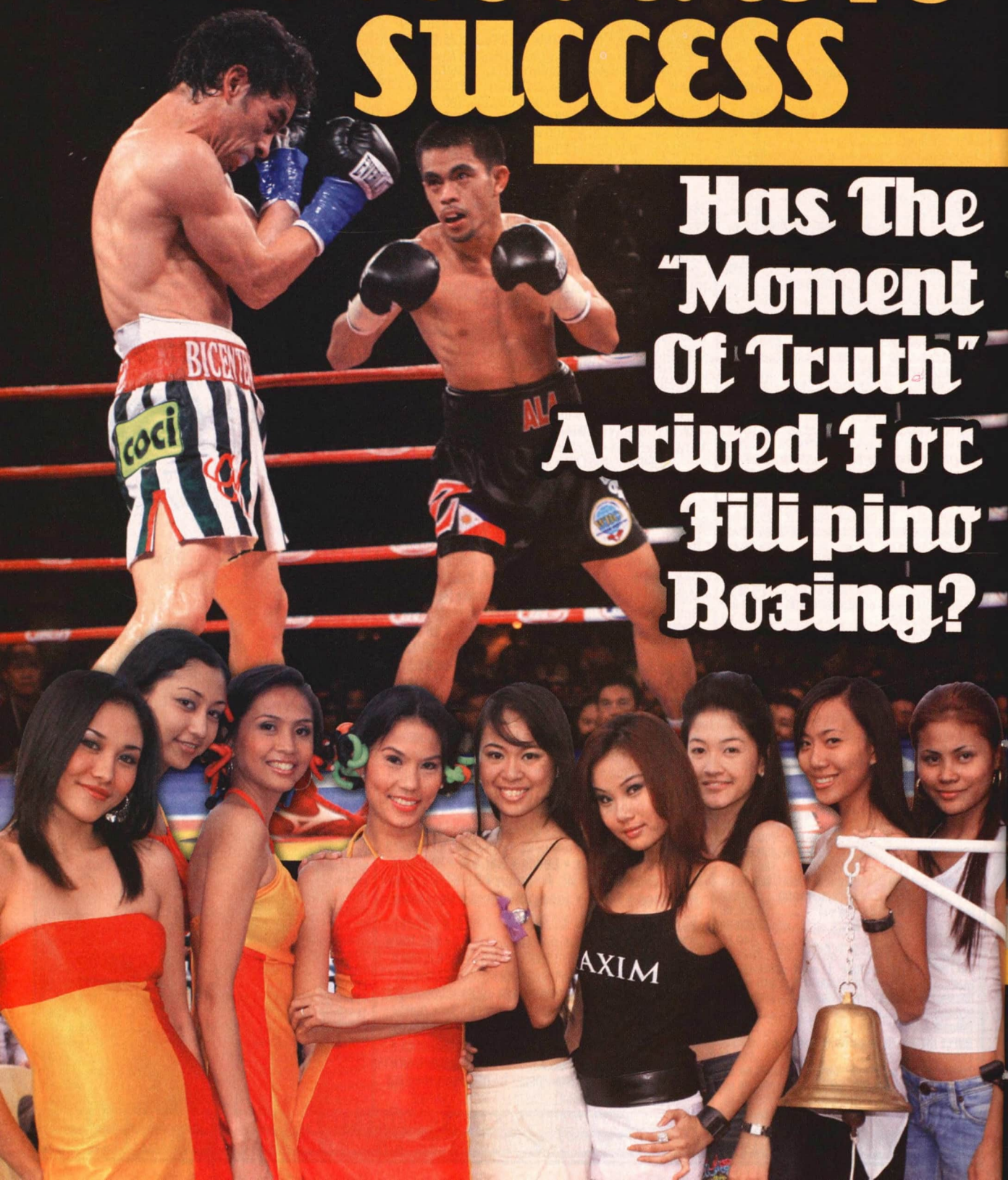
CAPITALIZING ON PAC-MAN'S SUCCESS

Has The "Moment Of Truth" Arrived For Filipino Boxing?



By Ted Lerner

An evening at Tony Aldeguer's spectacular hilltop mansion, overlooking the southern Philippine city of Cebu, would be good on any night, but on this tropical February evening there was a special feeling in the steamy air. Aldeguer, one of Cebu's most prominent businessmen and certainly its biggest boxing impresario, had laid out a massive spread for his guests—native delicacies such as roast pig, sweet and sour fish, and pesto and pasta for the western palate. Wine and top-shelf liquor flowed freely. White-coated waiters with impeccable manners served the merrymakers.

That the night air was filled with excited conversation, laughter, hugs, and high fives was no surprise. Filipino hospitality tends to have that effect on people. But in this case there was even more to be energized about. The guests included Eric Gomez, vice president of Golden Boy Promotions, WBO President Francisco Valcarcel and his entourage of alphabet groupies, various local boxing people, prominent politicians, and plenty of approving media. Everybody was discussing Aldeguer's biggest promotion to date, dubbed the "Moment Of Truth," which was just two days away.

Aldeguer worked the crowd, greeting each table, making sure everyone was happy. Aldeguer

PHOTOS BY SCOTT MALLON

With a large capacity crowd filling the outdoor stadium (above), plenty of beautiful round card girls (opposite page bottom), and a world-class main event between Fernando Montiel and local favorite Z Gorres (opposite page top), Cebu City took a big step toward becoming a major international fight site.

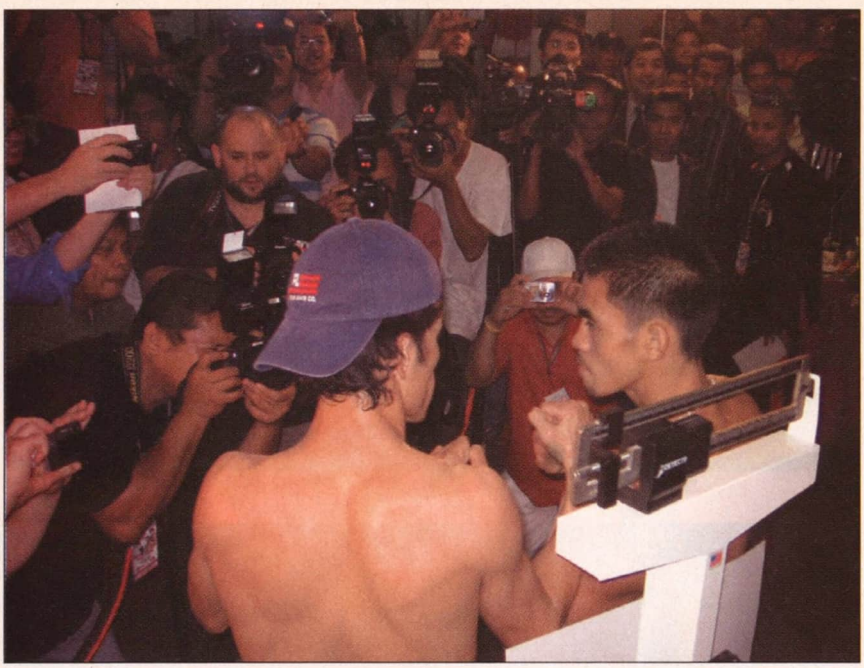


PHOTO BY TED LERNER

A swarm of photographers close in on Montiel and Gorres at the weigh-in, which was one of one of several media events leading up to the big card in Cebu, the second-largest city in the Philippines and the birthplace of many of its greatest fighters.

does not need boxing to make a living; his involvement stems mostly from the love of the sport. For more than 30 years, he has run the Philippines' most vibrant amateur program and a few years back he built a sprawling state-of-the-art gym in Cebu. In the early-1990s, he ventured into professional boxing, developing a stable of nearly 50 fighters, all of whom he feeds, houses, and sends to school. He's consistently turning out well-trained, competent boxers, and disciplined young men. The only thing he lacks is a world champion.

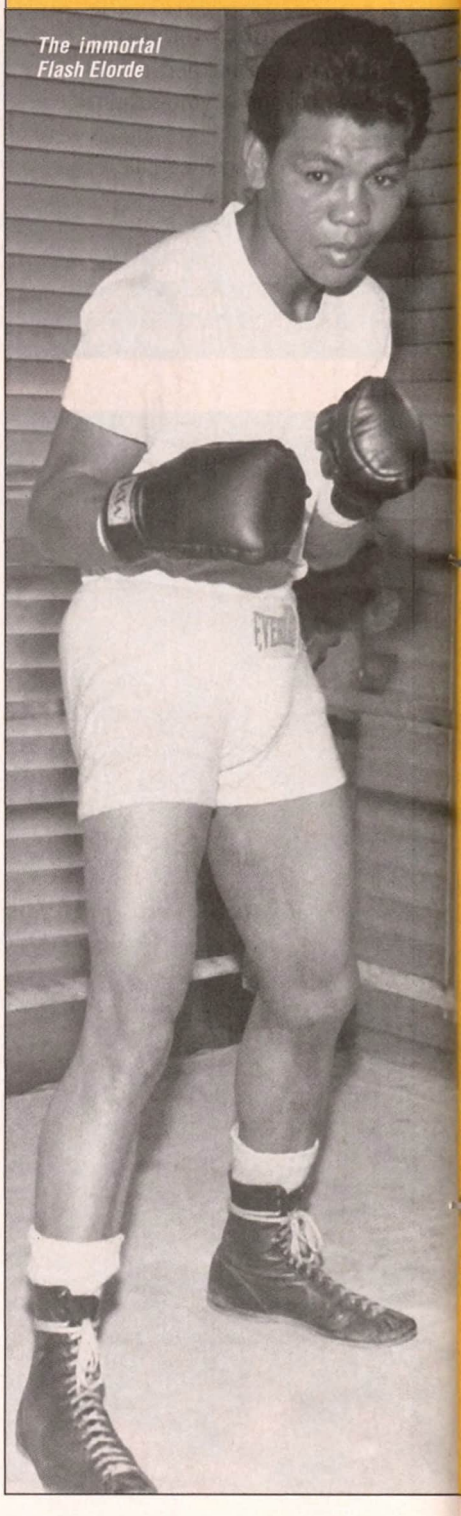
PHOTO BY TED LERNER

Co-promoter Sammy Gello-ani displays the so-called "World Cup Of Boxing." Original plans called for the cup to be up for grabs in a Mexico vs. Philippines card, but that fell through when several Mexican titleholders declined to defend in the Philippines. Nevertheless, the cup created quite a stir with the local media.

"It's hell getting fights in the States," Aldeguer said. "Lots of Filipino boxers just can't get fights there. Our success depends on how we project ourselves. It's not just having good boxers. We need boxers with charisma."

Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions obviously feels that Aldeguer has some fighters with appeal. Several months earlier, Golden Boy had joined forces with Aldeguer and his promoter, Sammy Gello-ani, promising their boxers fights in the United States. Golden Boy, taking note of the massive

A Legend's



The immortal Flash Elorde

Grandson Turns Pro

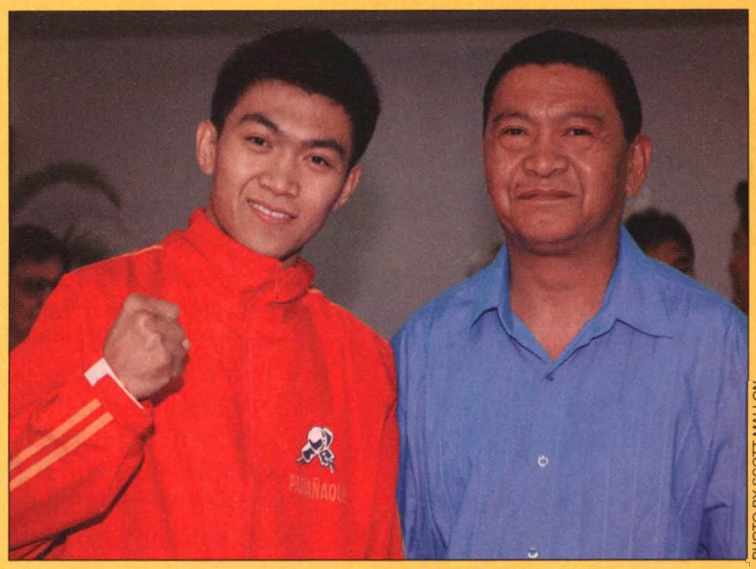


PHOTO BY SCOTT MALLON

Juan Martin and Johnny Elorde

Easily the most famous boxer to emerge from the Cebu area was Gabriel "Flash" Elorde, who used his fists to escape wrenching poverty and become a beloved legend worthy of inclusion in grade-school textbooks. Nicknamed "Bai," an affectionate phrase that means "friend" in the local dialect, Elorde is loved as much for his charitable and humble ways as he was for his awesome fighting skill. Even today, the name Elorde can be found all over Cebu in the form of a popular glove-shaped bread sold at bakeries for five cents apiece.

Cebuanos were excited to learn that one of the bouts on the undercard of the "Moment Of Truth" was to feature the professional debut of Flash Elorde's grandson, 22-year-old Juan Martin "Bai" Elorde.

The eldest son of Flash's second son, Johnny, and his wife, Liza, Juan Martin bares uncanny similarities to his legendary grandfather. The young Bai looks like a young Flash. He fights as a natural junior lightweight, the division his famous grandfather ruled from 1960 to '67. And although he does everything else right-handed, Elorde boxes left-handed, just as his grandfather did.

It's been more than 30 years since a member of the Elorde clan fought in a Philippine ring. Flash never let his children become professional boxers, insisting that his fists had done all the hard work, and now his offspring could pursue less violent vocations. Still, the entire Elorde family has been in the business end of boxing, managing fighters and promoting regular shows over the last several decades.

Raised on the grounds of the Elorde Sports Complex in the Sucat area of Metro Manila, Juan Martin developed an affinity for the austere life of the boxers in his midst.

"I always wanted to be a boxer," he said. "I grew up around boxing. I see the boxers train everyday."

His parents, however, were dead set against it. They allowed their son to box in the amateurs, but insisted that he also finish college. After 10 amateur bouts and a degree in hotel and restaurant management, however, Bai knew where his future lay.

"I want to become like Lolo (the Filipino word for grandfather), like Manny Pacquaio," he told his parents, who still said no. But when he insisted, and even threatened to go fight for another manager, the parents realized their son was serious.

Although he doesn't sleep in the Spartan dorm on the Elorde grounds, the young Elorde gets up every morning at 5 a.m. to do his roadwork with the other boxers and trains every day in the gym. In Cebu, thousands of fans came early, wanting to catch a glimpse of the local legend's grandson.

Elorde looked a little hesitant on his way to a four-round decision, and his mom, Liza, who held a rosary while her son boxed, admitted he had to buckle down. "He needs to work on his stamina," she said.

As he progresses through the ranks, the young Elorde knows the interest in him will be intense.

"I'm not only fighting for myself," he said. "I'm fighting for the Elorde name."

Does he look to his famous *lolo* for inspiration when he steps through the ropes?

"I try not to think about it because it might affect my performance," he said. "People will expect too much. My goal is to become a world champion. I'm inspired by my *lolo* and by Manny Pacquiao."

—T.L.

Filipino demographic turning out for Manny Pacquiao's fights in the U.S., saw an opportunity to open up what they feel is a long-neglected pipeline from the Philippines. They also understand that the growing rivalry between Mexican and Filipino boxers is good for business.

The Saturday night card, which was co-promoted by Golden Boy, along with Aldeguer and Gello-ani, originally looked to be one of Asia's biggest and more interesting shows ever, with the Philippines vs. Mexico angle taking center stage. Initially, the event was supposed to be called the "World Cup Of Boxing." Golden Boy wanted to replicate the success

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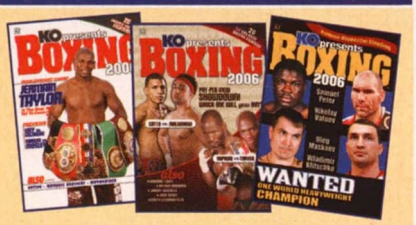

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of its October 2006 card in Phoenix, Arizona, where six fighters from Mexico took on six from Thailand, and which the Mexicans won. But Aldeguer discovered that he couldn't persuade WBO titleholders Daniel Ponce De Leon and Jhonny Gonzalez to defend their belts in the Philippines.

Even so, Aldeguer was still keen to stage a major show, so the promotion pushed forward in a somewhat watered down version, but still created considerable interest.

In the main event, the stylish, light-fisted local boy, Z Gorres, would try to wrest the WBO super flyweight belt from Mexico's Fernando Montiel. The co-feature pitted popular junior featherweight from the neighboring island of Bohol, Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista, against a relatively unknown Mexican. A large crowd was expected to fill the open-air stadium, and the entire card would be seen live throughout the Philippines on the country's biggest network, which was also to beam the fight to its millions of subscribers overseas in America, Europe, Mexico, and the Middle East.

As a bonus, Gello-ani revealed that the actual World Cup trophy, allegedly worth $500,000, had been brought to the Philippines by Gomez and was sitting in a bank vault in downtown Cebu.

One would be hard-pressed to find a better place to base the renaissance of this proud boxing nation than in the "Queen City Of The South." The second largest city in the country, with 2 million people in the metro area, this vibrant port is the economic and cultural hub of the southern Philippines. Cebu also doubles as a tourist enclave, featuring sun-drenched beaches within driving distance, crystal clear waters, and golf courses.

Cebu City is a lively, somewhat chaotic urban sprawl, filled with laid back, friendly locals. Gleaming shopping malls stand next to ancient Spanish stone forts and old-time seaports. The teeming streets are filled with commerce, with itinerants selling damned near everything from fruit to pirated DVDs. Smoke from Cebu's famous barbecues, overflowing with flaming meats and fish, fills the air.

As far as pugilistic history goes, Cebu fits the bill perfectly. It has always been the Philippines hotbed of boxing. Most of the greats of Philippine boxing came from Cebu, including Hall of Famer Gabriel "Flash" Elorde.

"The best Philippine boxers have always come from Cebu and the southern Philippines," Aldeguer said. "I guess they are hungrier here."

But boxing heroes have only been the latest fighting icons from this part of the country. Combat and heroism goes back nearly half a millennium in these parts. Neighboring Mactan Island was the site, in 1521, of the great warrior chieftain Lapu-Lapu's epic battle with legendary Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan. Magellan met his demise in that battle, and the dramatic conquest has been a source of nationalistic pride and Filipino identity ever since.

Of course, Magellan was working for Spain, and despite Lapu-Lapu's victory, Spain ended up colonizing the Philippines for more than 350 years. So the fighting circle is now complete, and with some of the best fighters coming from the Cebu area, it seems a natural for Cebu to stage encounters between Filipinos and the new Spanish-speaking invaders.

"We are only going to get bigger," Gello-ani said. "We'd even like to expand into promoting small shows in the States to take advantage of the Filipino crowds there."

There are roughly 1.85 million people of Filipino heritage living in the U.S, half of which in California.

At the Waterfront Hotel in Lahug, the morning after the reception at Aldeguer's mansion, the cavernous, comfortable lobby was bustling with activity. And the boxing crowd joined the chatter as they awaited rides to the Rajah Park Hotel for the official weigh-in.

"The history of boxing goes like this," said Argentinean matchmaker Sampson Lewkewicz, who works for Golden Boy and put the fights together for the Moment of Truth card. "It used to be the white man dominating. Then it was the African-American, then the Mexican. Now it's the Filipino. They'll be bringing many champions from this country."

Lewkewicz likes to refer to himself as "Picasso," an apparent reference to his matchmaking skills. Of course, to proclaim to the world that Filipinos, simply because of Manny Pacquiao and a handful of prospects, have now risen definitively to the top of the boxing world is patently ridiculous and little more than self-serving hyperbole. But the trend is clear, nonetheless: Pacquiao's success has opened doors that were once closed to Filipinos.

"Six years ago, Filipinos were strictly opponents," said Lewkewicz, "and second-class opponents at that. Now, Manny Pacquiao is the biggest taxpayer in the Philippines."

While Lewkewicz waxed poetic about Bautista's skills and potential, and informed that the 20-year-old would be fighting on the undercard of Maywhether-De La Hoya in May, the opponent he offered the young Filipino on the Cebu card did little to inspire. The man Lewkowicz had lined up, Colombian Feider Viloria, did have a 19-1-1 (13) record. However, 12 of his victories had come against guys with no wins. When Viloria failed to show in Cebu due to visa problems, a last-minute replacement was found, Mexican Marino Gonzalez, who supposedly had been in training for a fight in Mexico. He had a 29-8 (15) record, but it was also riddled with opponents sporting big fat goose eggs in the win column.

The weigh-in across town in the second-floor ballroom of the Rajah Park Hotel showed that for Filipinos every occasion is a reason to party. Organizers provided another buffet and red-vested waiters plied the excited throng with soft drinks. While a thick scrum of media jostled for the coveted shot of the main-event fighters posing by the scale, a feel-good, can-do atmosphere seemed to permeate the room.

After the weigh-in, the famished boxers begged to be left alone with lunch, and the attention of the story-hungry media soon turned to a certain golden trophy. A convoy of cars motored back across town to the Union Bank, where promoter Gello-ani pulled out the shining World Cup from the vault.

Commissioned by Golden Boy for $500,000, the solid-gold trophy is encrusted with 15,000 diamond chips, along with a number of emeralds, rubies, and sapphires. This was enough to send the entire bank staff fleeing their desks to coo at the expensive bauble. As the excited crowd giggled and posed for pictures, a proud Gello-Ani promised more big things to come.

"Soon we will promote the World Cup here," he said, smiling. "This trophy will stay here where it belongs."

By fight time, the sense of anticipation across the province had become intense. More than 20,000 fans packed the outdoor stadium of the Cebu City Sports Complex, along with well-known faces from show business and politics. With the beautiful set-up, combined with the warm tropical night, it was about as good a scene as boxing could produce anywhere.

"This is incredible," said Golden Boy's Gomez as he scanned the huge throng in the stands. "I've never seen anything like this." Moments before the main event, Pacquiao strolled in and, to his surprise, was greeted with a mixture of loud cheers and boos. His decision to enter politics has not been well-received by his millions of Filipino fans, who despise politics and the people who ply that seamy trade. Pac-Man seemed genuinely crushed by the odd reception and slumped quietly in his ringside chair the rest of the night.

Up until this point in his career, Gorres' light-hitting, scientific style had done little to excite Philippine

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fans, but as this was a title fight and his opponent a highly respected veteran, the fans were perched firmly on the edge of their seats. Despite appearing gaunt at the weigh-in, it was the southpaw Gorres who displayed more energy in the first three-quarters of the fight, consistently beating Montiel to the punch. The Mexican simply couldn't get a spark, and Gorres, fired up by the crowd, seemed to be well in control.

In the 10th, however, Montiel, 33-2-1 (24), rocked Gorres with a two-punch combination, causing the Filipino to stumbled and grab. Then, without even issuing a warning, referee Sammy Viruet deducted a point from Gorres for holding.

Gorres fought back bravely in the 11th, and seemed to be well ahead. The two scrapped wildly in the final round, but Viruet deducted another point with a ticky-tacky holding call.

After the final bell, the crowd roared and the stadium took on a fiesta-like atmosphere. Everyone seemed certain the Philippines would have a new titleholder. But when the verdict was read, the result was a split decision in favor of Montiel. Judge Denny Nelson (Minnesota) scored it 115-111 for Gorres, but was overruled by Las Vegas' Chuck Giampa, who had it 114-112 for Montiel, and Mexican-American Raul Caiz, who scored it 115-111 for Montiel. THE RING scored the fight in Gorres' favor, 114-112, including the two points deducted for penalities.

Some in the crowd booed, but most people appeared stunned and shell-shocked by the outcome. Aldeguer lost his cool for a few moments and shouted at the New Yorker Viruet, who was busy mingling with WBO officials at ringside.

The co-feature provided a much more satisfying, if predictable outcome.

PHOTO BY SCOTT MALLON

Filipino idol Manny Pacquiao sits glumly at ringside in Cebu, along with his wife, Jinkee. That's Lito Atienza, mayor of Manila, in the flowered shirt, leaning forward. Many in the crowd of approximately 20,000 booed Pac-Man because they are unhappy with his decision to enter the political arena.

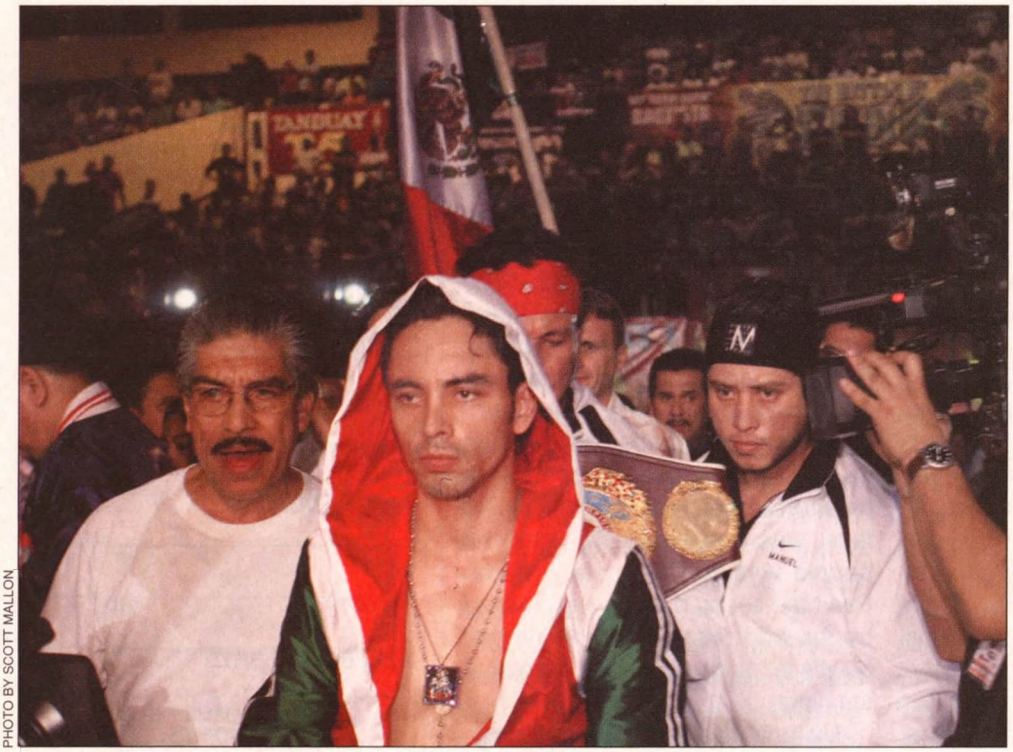


PHOTO BY SCOTT MALLON

Fernando Montiel makes his ring entrance at Cebu City Sports Complex to defend the WBO 115-pound belt. Montiel has moved back to junior bantamweight after losing a split decision to Jhonny Gonzalez at 118 pounds in his previous fight.

The handsome Bautista draws tens of thousands when he fights on the neighboring island of Bohol and seems to be every Filipino's choice to succeed Pacquiao. He's been handled very carefully, however, and this match was typical. He bowled over the hapless Gonzalez with a liver punch in the third, so at least the Philippines got a small measure of revenge.

At the postfight party, with the shock of the Montiel-Gorres decision lying heavily in the air, everyone tried to put on a brave face. It seems, however, that when it comes to the alphabet cartels, the Filipino naiveté knows no bounds. Aldeguer talked of perhaps trying for an IBF title fight, and Gello-ani said the future would still include the WBO.

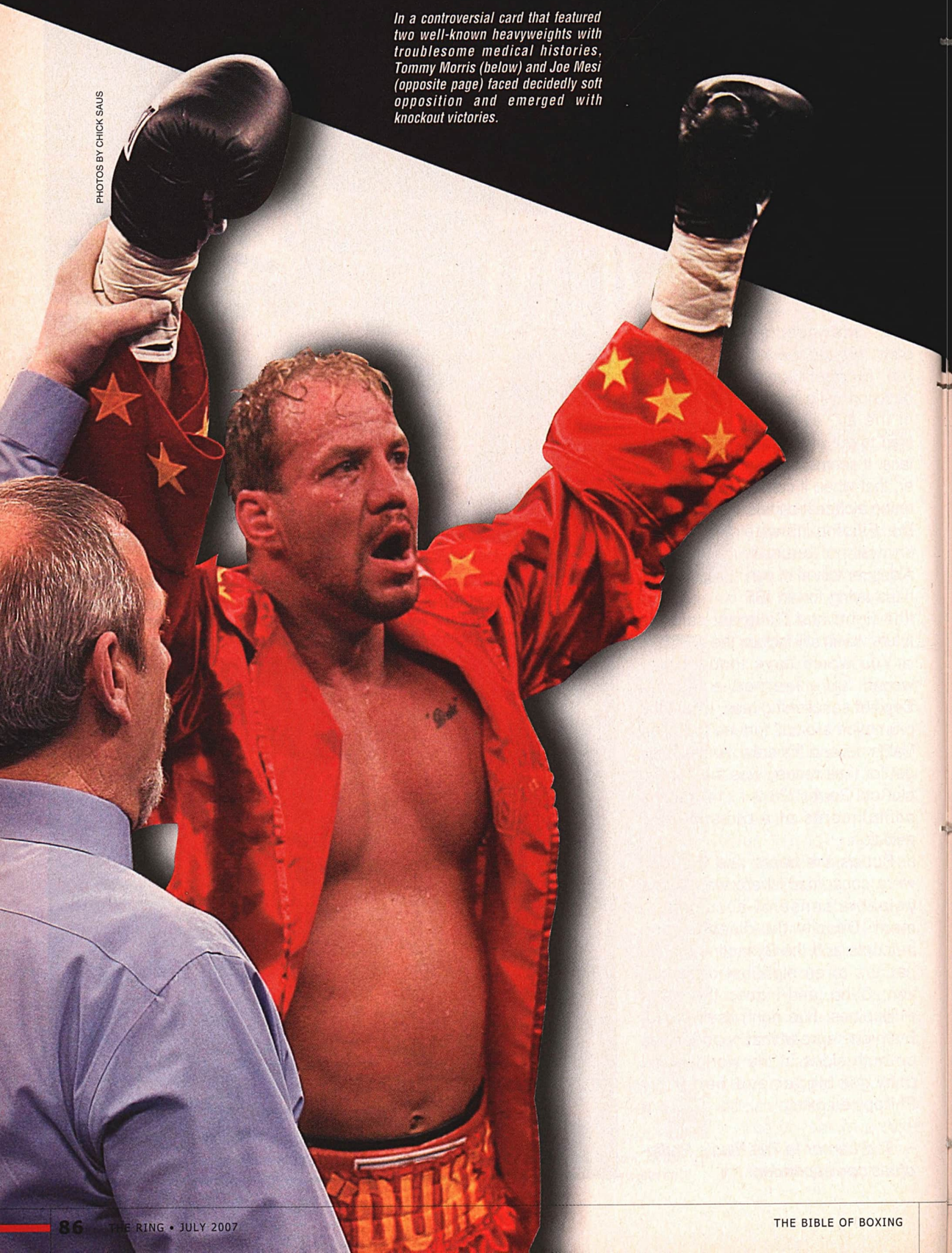
You would have thought they would have learned a lesson. Beyond sanctioning fees, it cost the promotion a small fortune to import Valcarcel and his crew. And all they get for their money was the second blot on Gorres' 26-2-1 (14) record, compliments of a questionable decision.

But as the beers and the food were consumed, there was also a palpable sense of accomplishment. Despite the disappointing outcome and the Byzantine machinations of an alphabet organization, Cebu, and indeed the entire Philippines, had done itself proud. Everyone agreed that opportunities on both sides of the world would only get bigger and better for Philippine boxing. ■

Ted Lerner is THE RING's Philippines correspondent.

Gorres got off to a good start and appeared to build a big lead (above), but Montiel mounted a rally in the 10th round (below), and when the referee penalized Gorres two points for holding, the Mexican managed to hang on to his belt with a controversial split decision.

PHOTOS BY SCOTT MALLON

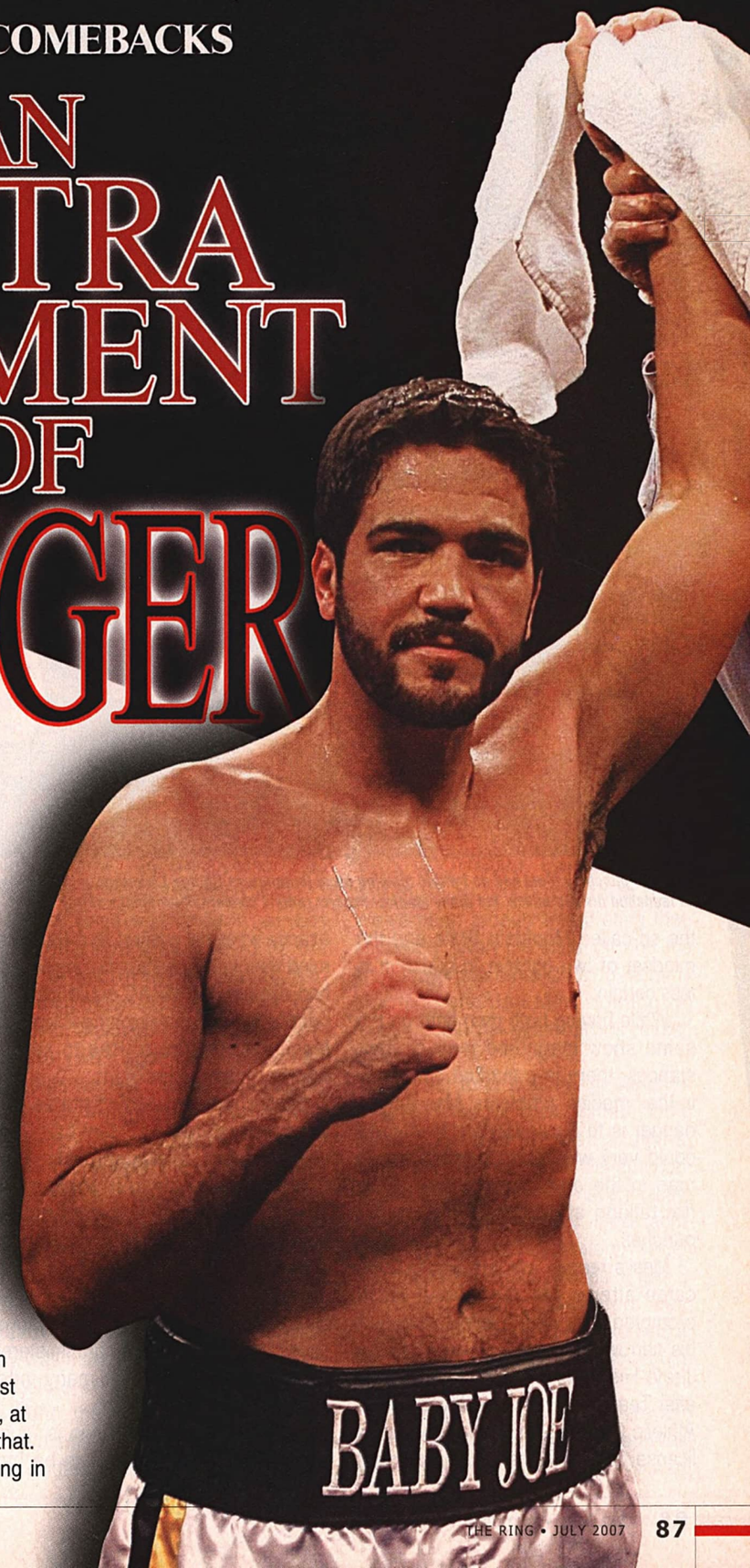


PHOTOS BY CHICK SAUS

In a controversial card that featured two well-known heavyweights with troublesome medical histories, Tommy Morris (below) and Joe Mesi (opposite page) faced decidedly soft opposition and emerged with knockout victories.

THE MORRISON, MESI COMEBACKS

AN EXTRA ELEMENT OF DANGER



By Mike Greenhilll

Comebacks have been as common as spit buckets throughout the history of boxing, but seldom, if ever, has there been a card quite like the one held at the Mountaineer Race Track in Chester, West Virginia, on February 22, when the spotlight shone on two high-profile fighters with questionable medical histories. If it wasn't for the seriousness of the situation, promoters could have called it "The Night Of The Living Dead."

We speak, of course, of the comebacking heavyweight duo of Tommy Morrison and Joe Mesi, a couple of damaged pugs who have a lot more in common than skin pigmentation: Both have been diagnosed with life-threatening conditions, but both insist they are fit to fight. And in West Virginia, at least, they are legally able to do just that. What that says about the state of boxing in

PHOTO BY CHUCK SAUS

The hard-punching Mesi had no trouble blowing away journeyman George Linberger in the opening round. It was "Baby Joe's" best performance since he launched his comeback, but many medical experts remain concerned for Mesi's safety.

the so-called Mountain State and the mindset of two fighters in question is less certain.

While having both men fight on the same show magnified their circumstances, there is a marked difference in their medical problems: Mesi's main danger is to himself, while Morrison's could very well prove perilous to the man in the other corner. And we're not talking about the effects of his punches.

Mesi's reentry into the ring in 2006 came after a year-and-a-half layoff prompted by a brain bleed suffered in his narrow 2004 decision over Vassiliy Jirov. His enforced sabbatical ended after Team Mesi took the Nevada State Athletic Commission to court to get his license to box reinstated. He didn't get exactly what he wanted, but the court ruled that as his Nevada boxing license had expired, the NSAC could not suspend a license that no longer existed. Mesi was, therefore, free to seek a license in other jurisdictions.

Since then, by skirting states with strict medical testing, Mesi has been able to fight in Michigan, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Montreal (Canada), and now West Virginia. All along, he has maintained that he believes that the brain bleed was so minute he is in no greater danger than any other fighter, an opinion reinforced by his personal physicians and privately administered tests, but questioned by many independent medical authorities.

The situation for Morrison is much more complicated. Although he had already suffered a trio of knockout defeats, "The Duke" was still a top name in 1995 due to his complexion, potent left hook, and having appeared in the movie *Rocky V*. But overnight, his career was derailed after testing positive for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, the day before his scheduled Las Vegas bout with Arthur "Stormy" Weathers. The NSAC immediately revoked his license to box, and since all other state commissions had to honor that revocation, Morrison's career appeared to be over.

A stunned Morrison, sounding contrite, announced the news shortly after the test results became public, saying he "had a chance to be a role model, and blew it." Now, 11 years later, after several recent HIV tests were nega-

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Morrison, in his first start since 1996, took some stick in the early going against inexperienced John Castle and seemed in danger of running out of gas.

tive, the 38-year-old Morrison decided to resume his career.

His case raises many questions. The first and most obvious one is why, after 11 years, did Morrison suddenly test clean. Second, if he thought the initial blood test was faulty, why did he not challenge the result sooner?

According to Dr. Margaret Goodman, former ringside physician for the Nevada State Athletic Commission, "Tommy underwent confirmatory lab work here in 1996. When a fighter is tested for anything, the tests serve as a screening for fitness to box. If the tests are abnormal, they can disqualify him either permanently or temporarily. It is the burden of the fighter to follow up on the test results and present them to the commission and/or the commission's medical advisory board. To my knowledge Tommy never submitted evidence that he was not HIV-positive."

Morrison, for his part, is adamant about his newfound clean diagnosis.

"I was never positive; it was a false positive," he insisted. "I was on steroids and [street] drugs, and that can give you a false positive."

When Versus boxing analyst Wally Matthews asked why he didn't challenge the results sooner, Morrison said, "I was depressed by the results and didn't know I could challenge them so soon. I just wanted to be by myself and get away from everything. But I never had any symptoms between then and now. Any weight loss I had since then was because of cocaine."

Some have wondered if perhaps Morrison's new status could be the result of improved HIV testing. But according to Dr. Goodman, "HIV testing is not much different today than it was 10 years ago. There are different tests for HIV. The immunoassay can show a negligible viral titer and be interpreted as negative, but a test called the Western Blot will always be positive if someone had HIV. Therefore, the question is what tests did Tommy recently have to confirm if he was ever HIV-positive, or did the (West Virginia) commission approve him because his immunoassay was essentially negative?"

Before allowing Morrison and Mesi to fight, the West Virginia Athletic Commission claimed to have done due diligence, as their reputation as a credible governing body was at stake, especially since West Virginia's pre-fight medicals are not as rigorous as in other states.

According to commission chairman Steve Allred, "Our legislative rules do not require mandatory blood tests, MRIs, or CT-scans. Our statute says you must be physically fit to fight. We've been broadly interpreting that, especially given the situation and the knowledge we have prior to Tommy Morrison and Joe Mesi fighting, to require additional examinations of both fighters.

"We set forth a stringent series of examinations for both fighters, both fighters adhered to those examinations, and the medical results and conclusive evidence that we have indicate that they're okay. Though these additional tests are not mandatory, we felt that, given the circumstances, it was in our best interests, the fighters' best interests, and boxing's best interests to test these individuals further, to require more examinations of them."

"Tommy didn't just come here and we said we'd let him fight," added West Virginia commission doctor Vincent

PHOTO BY CHUCK SAUS

Morrison grabs Castle after being hurt by a left hook in the opening round. Top Rank's Bruce Trampler believes it will take at least six months for Morrison to get in fighting shape.

Miele. "We said, 'Prove it; prove that you're safe to fight.' We got the test results from an expert in Nevada, and the screening test, the Eliza test, and the test for the HIV virus came back negative. So it's probably one of the safer fights we've had on the card, one of the safer fights this year."

When asked how he could be sure the blood tested in Nevada that was sent to West Virginia actually came from Morrison, Dr. Miele replied, "It came from a physician's office who's well-respected in the sport, they actually have a good trail for the blood. They have a photocopy of the driver's license of the woman who took the blood from Tommy Morrison and a photocopy of the driver's license of Tommy Morrison when the tests were done."

In response to Matthews' question of how Morrison could test negative years after the original positive test, Dr. Miele replied, "If he had just tested negative for the virus itself, I'd be concerned about whether the virus is somehow suppressed temporarily. But he also tested negative for the antibody. How can he have tested positive before and not now? To be honest, I just don't know. But it's hard to hold Tommy to a higher standard when he's proving to us that both the antibody and the virus are not in his body."

Morrison's opponent, John Castle, was understandably concerned and expressed mixed feelings.

"I have two kids that I want to see grow old," said Castle. "But I was told that he had it, now he doesn't have it, and the Medical Association or somebody said I can't get it even if the did have it. They say you can only get it if you rub open cuts against each other."

Bruce Trampler of Top Rank, the promotional company that recently signed Morrison to an eight-fight contract, had no such hesitation.

"Tommy approached us," said Trampler. "He had been romanced by other promoters, but we had some success with him years back, so there was that comfort level already. He came up clean on his tests, so we had no reservations. Plus, Tommy has good name recognition with the fans."

While the fight with the 35-year-old Castle seemed almost spur of the moment, things were not as sudden as they seemed. According to Trampler, "We were trying to get Tommy a fight date in Phoenix in January 2007, but it was not publicized due to him not yet being cleared to fight. Once we got the tests results back, the next available date was February 22 in Chester. He was able to get his West Virginia license a day or two before the fight."

When asked if there was any backlash to signing Morrison, Trampler replied, "There was both positive and negative feedback, though some of the negative came from other promoters, so you have to take that with a grain of salt."

Though many would have loved to have seen Morrison's initial return to the ring televised, Top Rank insisted it stay off the Versus telecast. "We made the right choice to keep it off the air," said Trampler. "There was so much going on around Tommy that we were trying to keep some of the circus atmosphere out of it. He was rusty for as long as the fight lasted, so we thought it was best to go under the radar somewhat. I draw a parallel between his situation and George Foreman's when he came back. We want him to crawl before he can walk, and walk before he can run. We're estimating six to eight months for him to get back in real fighting shape."

Mesi's bout on the same card was also worrisome for some in the medical field.

"I would be more concerned about Joe's condition than Morrison's, since one blow to the head would be more dangerous for Joe than it would be for Tommy," said Dr. Goodman.

Fortunately for Mesi, he didn't give opponent George Linberger, a full-time Ohio schoolteacher and part-time boxer, any time to test his chin. Mesi, 229½, jabbed from a distance early in the first round, then opened up when he sensed no imminent danger.

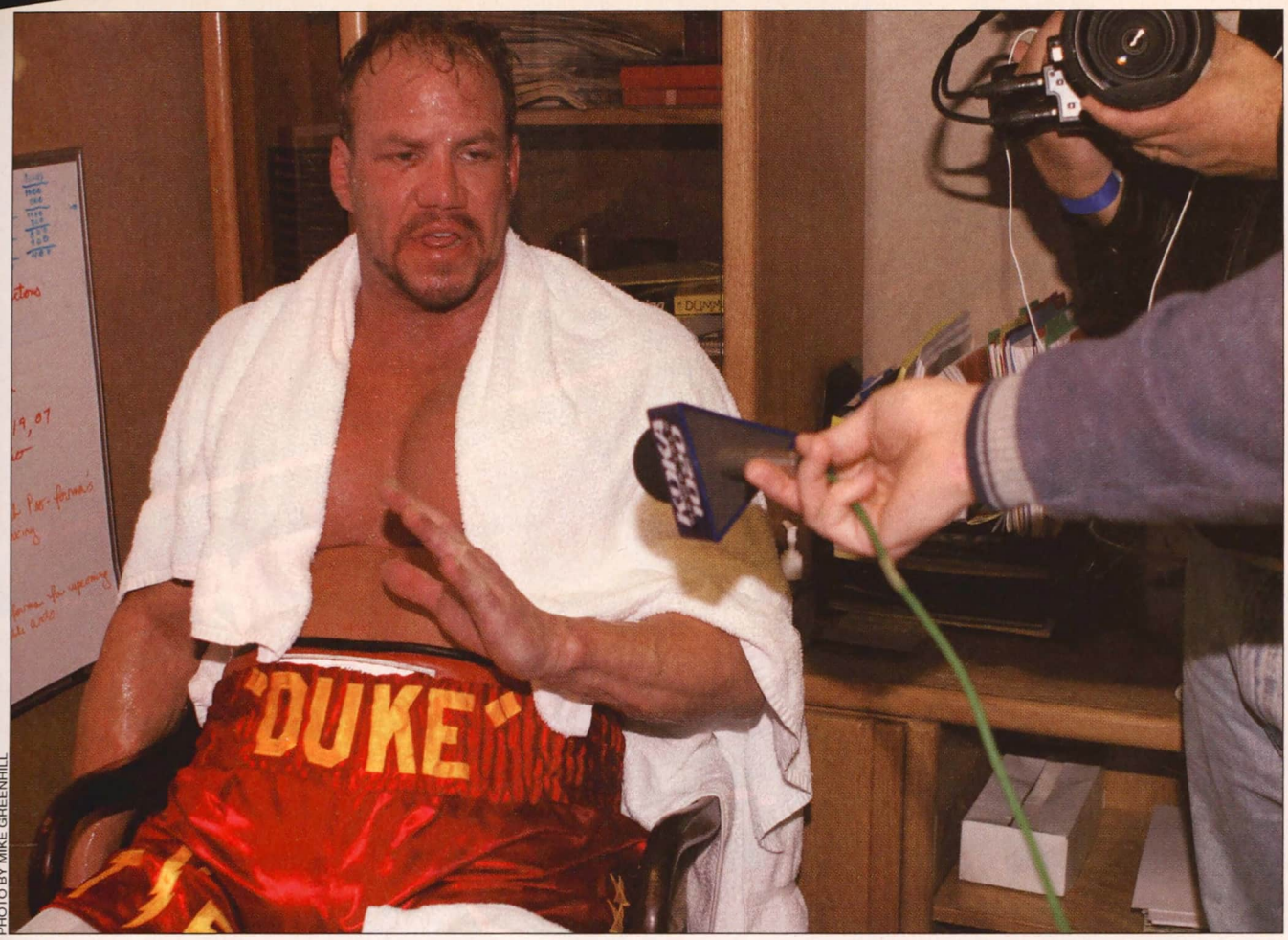


PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Morrison speaks with the media following his kayo of Castle. Even though he appeared rusty and in no condition to go more than a couple of rounds, "The Duke" has signed a contract with Top Rank and was scheduled to fight in San Antonio in mid-April. Like West Virginia, Texas has a liberal licensing policy.

A solid right to the face wobbled the 40-year-old Linberger badly, and the busloads of Mesi fans who had driven down from Buffalo to make it a record Mountaineer crowd of more than 3,400, went wild. Mesi followed up with a flurry that caused Linberger, 266½, to slide down the ropes onto the canvas. He was up at the count of eight, but looking woozy. When the fight resumed "Baby Joe" wasted no time, pounding Linberger with lefts and rights to the head that put him down for good at 1:55 of round one.

While it was a relatively impressive performance for Mesi, his fans shouldn't get too excited. Linberger, 29-9 (25), had previously been stopped six times, once in the first round by Butterbean. Still, it was the best Mesi had looked in his five comeback bouts and raised his record at 34-0 (27).

Morrison's bout did not last much longer than Mesi's, but featured more anxious moments for the favorite. Morrison came out in a crouch, moving in on the taller, lanky Castle without throwing. As a result, Castle found success with the left jab and a few left hooks, one of which appeared to hurt Morrison momentarily, causing him to hold.

All three judges gave Castle, 215, the first round, and he appeared to be winning the second as well, when suddenly a short left hook from Morrison, 220, found Castle's face, putting him on his back. He appeared to just barely beat the count, but referee Dave Johnson waved it off at the 1:49 mark of the second.

Good thing, too, because when Michael Buffer announced the time of the stoppage, Castle, 4-3 (2), turned to his trainer and asked, "I got knocked out?"

At an impromptu postfight press conference in his dressing room, Morrison, 47-3 (41), provided some self-analysis.

"I was really nervous coming into the ring, more nervous than I thought I would be," he admitted. "The fans were so loud. I wish I had done some public sparring just to get used to being in front of people again. I was trying to make him move around and use up energy, since heavyweights get tired moving around. I'm glad it's over with. I give myself a 6.5 grade out of 10."

With his attorney, Randy Lang, at his side, Morrison chose to deflect most questions about his prior medical condition.

"I don't want to look back; I just want to look forward," he philosophized.

With that, this peculiar night of boxing drew to a close. The answers to most questions pertaining to Mesi and Morrison went unanswered. But one thing is for sure: When men want to box as badly as these two men apparently do, they will ultimately find a jurisdiction that will allow them. ■

Mike Greenhill is a Maryland-based writer/photographer and a regular contributor to THE RING.

When Crazy Be Confined To

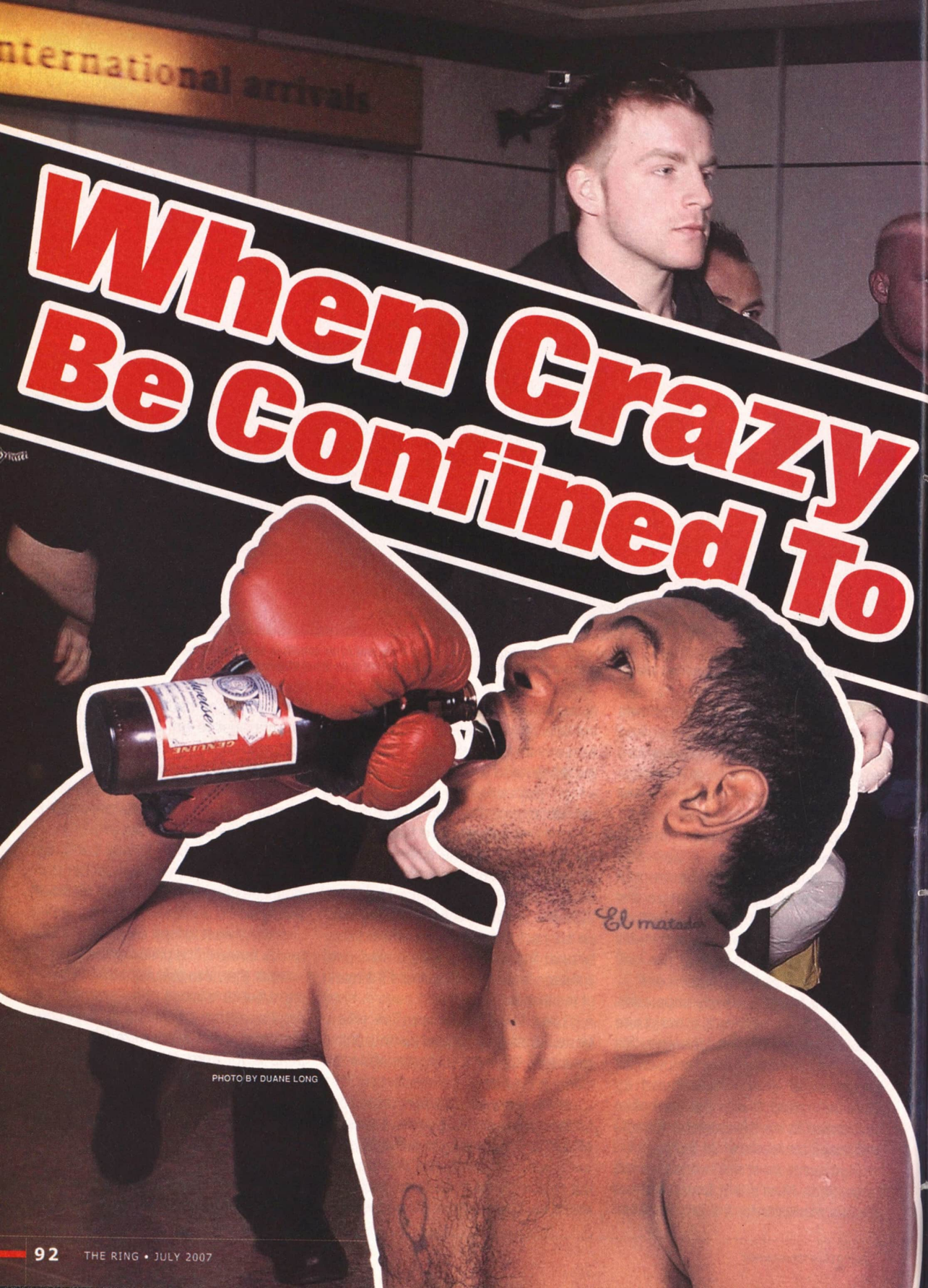


PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

Ricardo Mayorga, pictured enjoying his favorite adult beverage (opposite page), has recently been charged with bouncing checks in Nicaragua. Meanwhile, troubled featherweight Scott Harrison, pictured arriving back in Glasgow after being released from a prison in Spain, faces additional charges in the U.K.

Cannot The Ring

By Don Stradley

When the word got out that Ricardo Mayorga was in hot water again, this time for writing bad checks in his Nicaraguan homeland, it got us to wondering why certain fighters just seem born into trouble.

We're not talking about the murderers and genuinely bad men who have soiled the history of the Sweet

PHOTO BY JEFF J. MITCHELL GETTY IMAGES

Science, but rather the guys who get into jams time and time again. It makes us wonder: Why couldn't Leon Spinks drive to the corner store and back without hitting a telephone pole? Why was Oliver McCall scuffling with the Nashville cops, only to be brought to his knees by a Taser? Why was Andrew Golota arrested for impersonating an officer in Illinois—and what's he doing with all of those unlicensed weapons? Why is Peter McNeeley charged with driving the getaway car while his buddies ripped off a Walgreen's of 180 bucks and a fanny pack? Why can't these guys just stay home and watch ESPN Classic like the rest of us? Sure, some of them are broke and desperate, but getting thrown into the slammer isn't going to help their causes. And their actions can't be blamed solely on alcohol and drugs; there has to be some kink in their personality that attracts disaster.

Mayorga's February arrests for allegedly writing fraudulent checks weren't his first offenses. In 2004 he was cleared by the Nicaraguan Supreme Court of rape charges, but prior to that he was dragged into the courts on charges ranging from failure to return rented videotapes to assault and battery. A failed drug test after his 2006 bout with Oscar De La Hoya added to his bad reputation, but Mayorga's most frequent problems involve illegal drag racing; Managuan police once timed the chain-smoking, beer swilling Mayorga driving 112 miles-per-hour.

PHOTO BY MARC Y. MORRIS

A demonstrative Oliver McCall enjoys the moment (we think) along with Don King and co-manager Jimmy Adams following "The Atomic Bull's" kayo of Lennox Lewis in 1994. Success failed to change McCall's lifestyle, and he continues to get into trouble and spend time behind bars.

Mayorga, whose last name must be Spanish for "misdemeanor," wasn't the only fighter getting in trouble lately. Former featherweight titlist Scott Harrison misbehaved throughout 2006, brawling in Scottish pubs, allegedly stealing a car, assaulting police officers in Spain, and twice pulling out of fights. A stint in rehab for alcohol abuse and depression didn't help. His promoter, Frank Warren, severed ties with Harrison in December.

Maybe getting hit on the head for a living attracts a certain type. Maybe the long periods of isolation fighters go through creates an inevitable blowing off of steam that, unfortunately, gets their name on the local crime blotter. Whatever the reason, boxing has never been short of troublemakers and screw-ups.

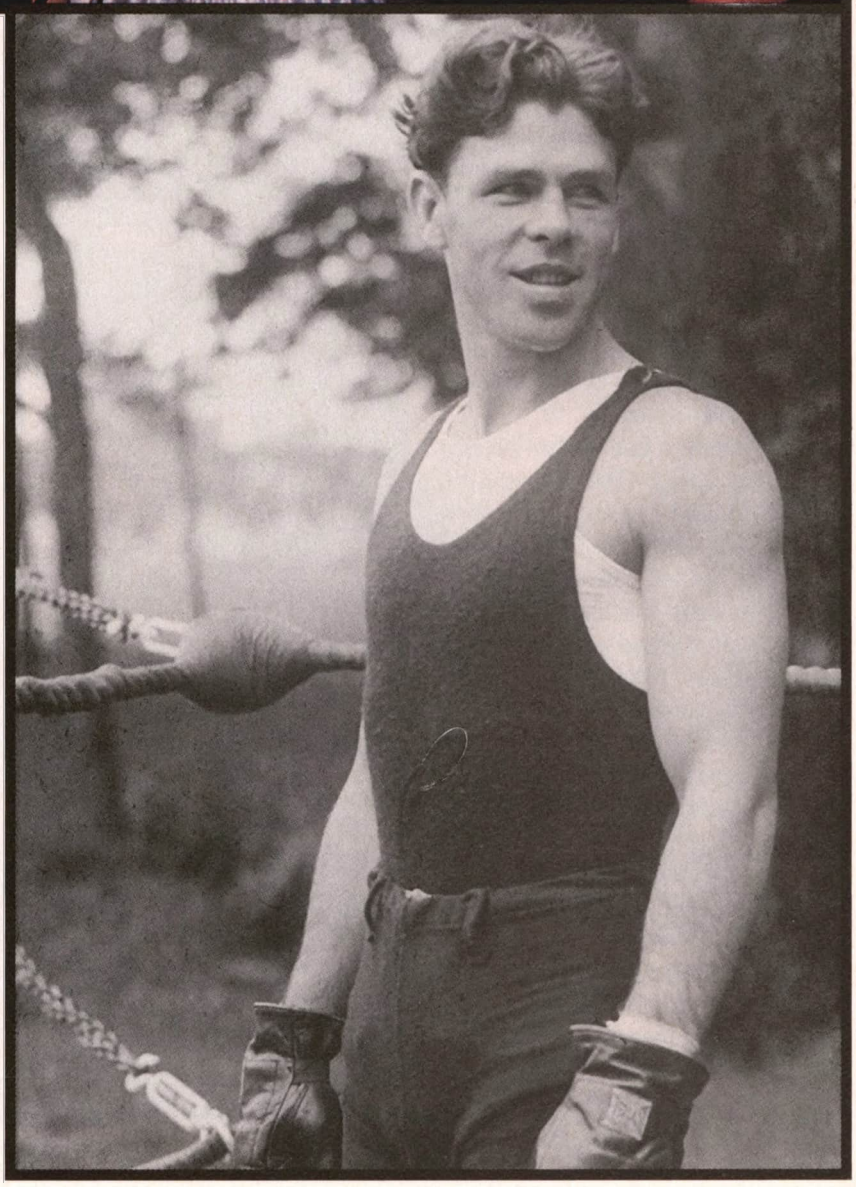
Harry Greb and Mickey Walker, two of the sport's all-time greatest, didn't let 1920s Prohibition stop them from drinking like Bowery bums. It's a tossup as to who was worse: Greb sweetened his alcohol with hookers,

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

Andrew Golota is accompanied by a couple of New York City cops during a public workout in 1996. Since then, the Polish heavyweight got into a bit of trouble when he was caught impersonating a police officer and possessing firearms without a permit.

often seen with two "sporting girls" at a time; Walker wasn't the tail chaser that Greb was, but he probably drank more, keeping a half-pint of gin in his corner during fights. The two fought in July 1925, and Greb won a 15-round decision. Legend has it the two met afterward at a New York speakeasy. After his tongue had been loosened by the devil's brew, Walker accused Greb of being a dirty fighter. Greb took exception to Walker's comment, which is ironic considering Greb's favorite combination was a thumb to the eye followed by a thumb to the other eye. Before Greb could get his coat off to resume their fight, Walker sucker-punched him. Greb's followers denied the incident, saying Greb never lost an alley fight.

Six decades after Walker and Greb brawled in the street, Mike Tyson made headlines in 1988 when he clocked Mitch "Blood" Green outside a Harlem clothing store at 4:00 a.m. Green, as manic a fighter as there has ever been, was in Tyson's face about a fight they'd



All-time great Mickey Walker won both the welterweight and middleweight titles, but always found plenty of time to hang out with John Barleycorn.

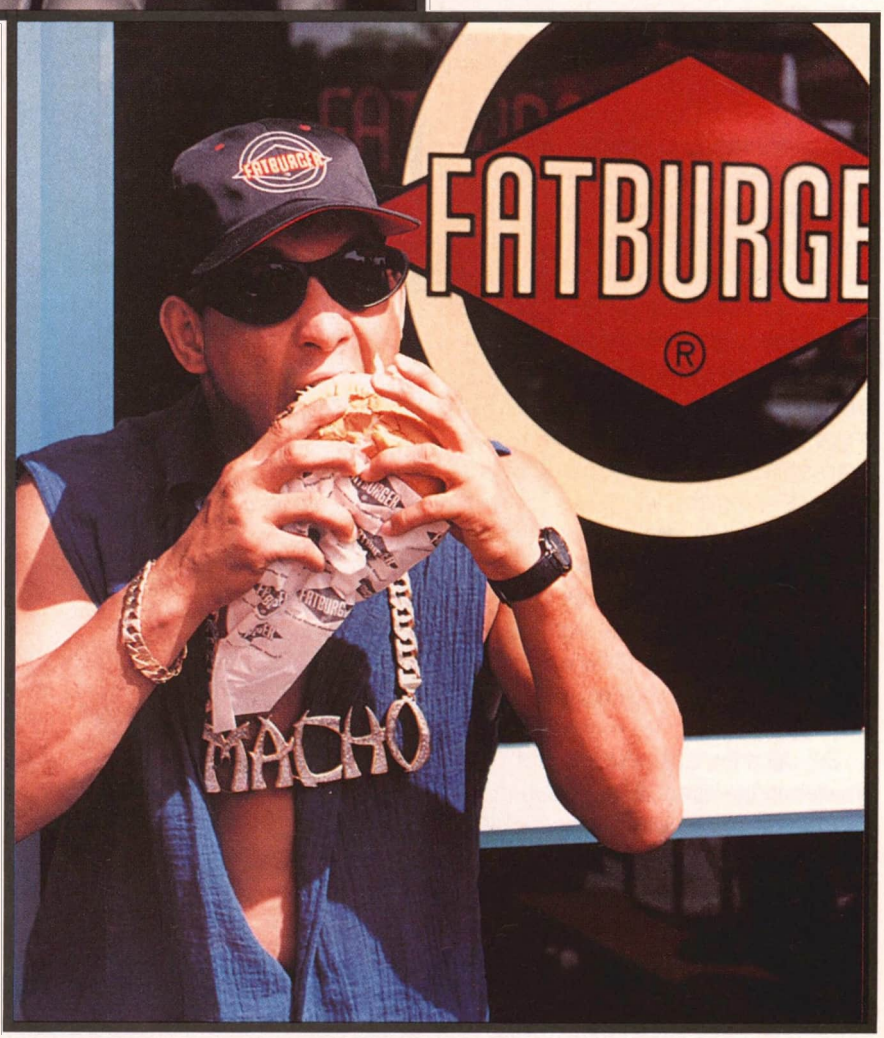
This is how Mitch "Blood" Green looked after his infamous 1988 streetfight with Mike Tyson. Despite his troubles with Tyson, Green was a pretty good fighter whose career was ruined by outside-of-the-ring problems.

had two years earlier. Green ended up with a swelling on his eye the size of an apple. Green later won a $45,000 settlement from Tyson, but by then he was well-established as loony.

Green wasn't a bad fighter—he was a four-time Golden Glove winner—but it's tough to have a boxing career when you're in and out of jail. Don't ask him for a ride, either; Green's driver's license has been suspended 54 times. He has been stabbed eight times, and shot four times (five, if you count the time he shot himself in the head testing a homemade zip gun). Green once held up a gas station and then spent an hour pumping gas into other people's cars, taking their money too. Since then Green has worked sparingly, sometimes as a doorman/bouncer. He also relies on the generosity of fans, friends, and the occasional promoter who calls him into action. He allegedly approached Tyson recently, crying that he was broke and needed a fight. Tyson, no stranger to controversy, reportedly gave Green a few thousand bucks to get lost.

Hector Camacho Sr. could usually outrun opponents, but he could never outrun the law, starting when he was a juvenile offender in New York's Spanish Harlem. Camacho's most notorious bust was when he was pulled over for driving with a girl on his lap. When asked what was up, Camacho said, "She was on my lap facing me. What do you think we were doing?" In 2005, at age 42, Camacho was arrested in Gulfport, Mississippi, for burglarizing a computer shop. Camacho proved one is never too old to be a punk.

Arturo Gatti nearly partied himself out of a career, sometimes not bothering to get his face sewn up before boarding a limo bound for club land. It wasn't uncommon to see an elegantly dressed Gatti leaking blood all over the floor of some Manhattan nightspot, sucking on a champagne bottle until sunrise. Two drunk driving busts didn't curb his



Hector Camacho's appetite for life went way beyond indulging in fast food. Among his many run-ins with the law was a 2005 bust for breaking into a computer store.

behavior: He was known to gulp wine from a paper cup during press conferences; in Miami he was stabbed in the back during a fight over a woman.

"You start to make a few dollars, and it can go to your head sometimes," Gatti said. "It was a blessing from God that I was able to rebound and dig myself out of the grave I'd dug. And that's who I am today. I used to play a little bit too hard. But don't get me wrong. I'm no angel." Gatti suggested his troublesome personal life was a reflection of his ring style. "I'm a wild guy," he said. "Look at the way I fight. I'm not normal."

Rocky Graziano, the popular middleweight champion of the late-1940s, echoed Gatti's sentiments when he said, "Anybody that becomes a fighter has got to be wacky or crazy." As an angry youth prowling the East Side neighborhoods of New York, Graziano stole cars, fought in the streets, and spent more than one night in jail. His handlers, Whitey Bimstein and Irving Cohen, turned the untamed street kid into box office gold. When his career was over, Graziano found success as a character actor on television, and later as a commercial pitchman, selling everything from cat food to yogurt. It was quite a turnaround for a hellion like Graziano.

The day of his fight with Max Baer, "Two Ton" Tony Galento had lunch in his New Jersey saloon and got into an argument with his brother, who punctuated their discussion by breaking a beer glass against Galento's mouth. The stitches needed to close the wound were later torn open by Baer's punches, causing Tony to swallow about two tons of blood before he finally succumbed. But nothing Galento, Graziano, or Gatti did could compare to the wild and crazy career of "The Sweetwater Swatter," Lew Jenkins. He was perhaps the wildest of them all.

His hell-bent career pre-dated the rise of rock 'n' roll music by more than a decade, but if any fighter deserved a rockin' soundtrack—preferably Jerry Lee Lewis' "Great Balls Of Fire"—it was Jenkins. He served his boxing apprenticeship behind a bakery in Sweetwater, Texas, where he would fight older Mexican kids for pies. Later he earned pocket money by boxing local roughnecks in a traveling carnival. Jenkins' style wasn't much, but his right hand was like a hammer wrapped in tape and

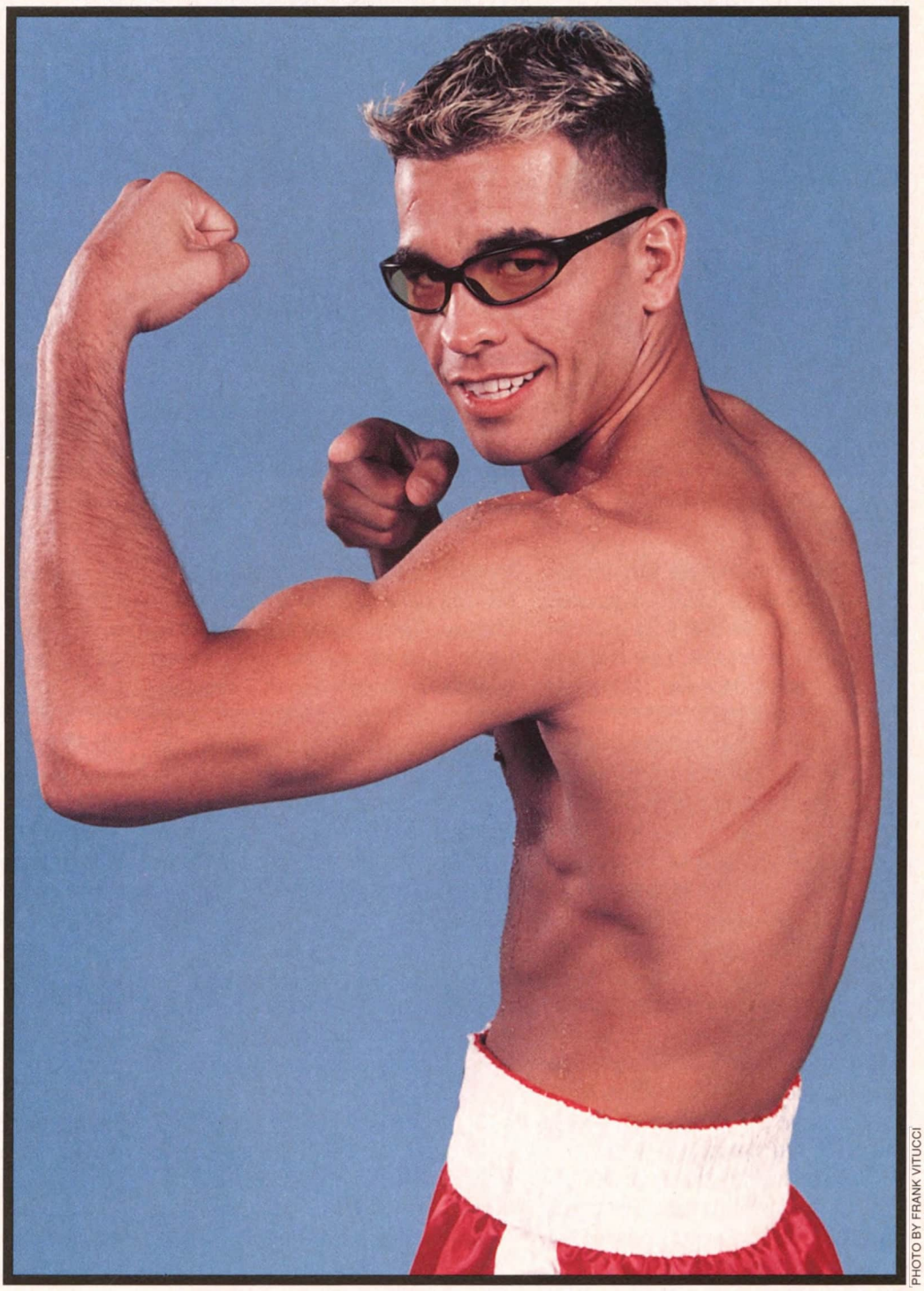


PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

Arturo Gatti lives life pretty much the same way he fights. If you look closely under his left shoulder blade, you can see the knife scar he got fighting over a woman. "I'm not normal," Gatti admitted.

Former middleweight champion Rocky Graziano takes a playful poke at actress Connie Stevens in 1983 during a public relations stint with the Playboy Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City. Graziano came a long way from his early days as a juvenile delinquent.

leather. He'd throw it to the face, the ribs, the heart, below the belt, while you were down, and after the bell. If his opponent had friends at ringside, Lew might hit them too. Jenkins once said, "All the rules that could be broken, I broke."

Between playing gigs with his two-piece hillbilly band, Jenkins rattled through the lightweight class like a farm truck leaving a trail of contenders behind like road kill. In 1940 he became the lightweight champion of the world by stopping Lou Ambers in Madison Square Garden. From there he swaggered head-first into a world of nightclubs. He was often drunk right up until the opening bell, sipping whiskey between rounds to straighten himself out. He didn't care much for training—his sole nod to conditioning was to cut his cigarette intake to four on the day of a fight.

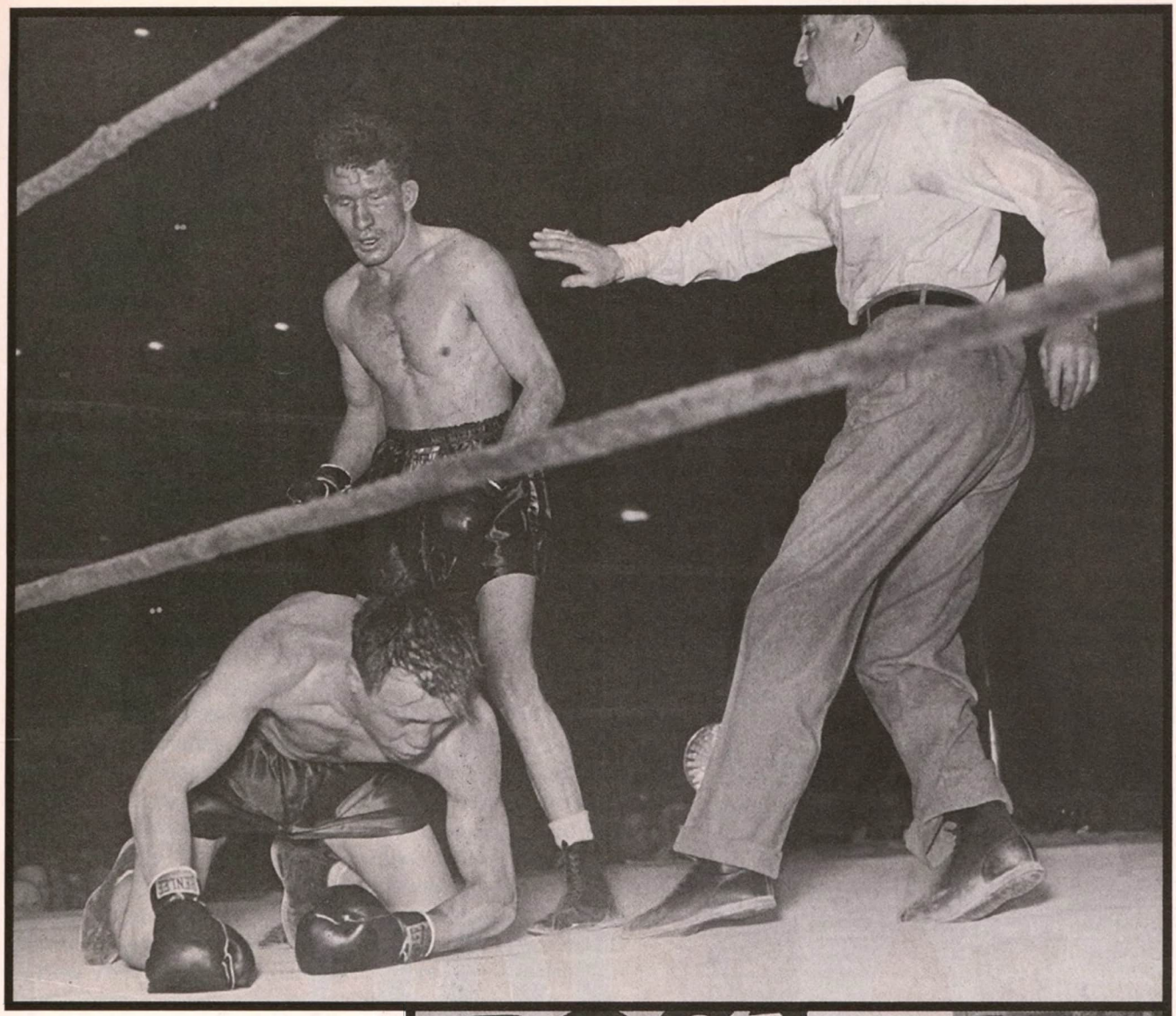
Jenkins fought Fritzie Zivic after getting his head beat in by cops in a local drunk tank; he fought Red Cochrane with three broken vertebrae in his neck, the result of a motorcycle crackup in New Jersey. When he wasn't battling the top lightweights of the day, he was battling his wife, Katie, a Dallas stockcar driver who occasionally settled their disputes by braining Lew with a kitchen skillet. During one drunken binge in Sparta, Tennessee, Jenkins and a friend drove off the side of a mountain into a cluster of trees. The next day a mechanic was brought out to inspect the damage; the automobile was wrapped around a tree like a piece of nightmarish pop art. The mechanic offered Jenkins $250 for the mangled heap. Jenkins told the mechanic, "Make it 300 and you can have the tree too."

Nineteen months after winning the lightweight title, Jenkins lost it to Sammy Angott. He continued fighting until 1950, leaving behind a booze-soaked record of 70-39-5 (49).

"I just completely wore myself out," Jenkins said in 1970. "I was washed up at 23. I should have held the title till I was at least 30 or 35, but I was never really in shape." In a 1958 RING story, Jenkins said, "I have nobody to blame. I chased myself out of the big-time before I had a chance to appreciate it. I was crazy, drunk, and plain stupid." One story he recounted had to do with the time he met singer Peggy Lee in a New Jersey nightclub. "You know what shape I was in? I asked her to do a request and, when she came back to my table, I asked her again. I was too drunk to know she already had sung it for me."

The irony of Jenkins' story is that he adjusted his wild ways to join the military, serving honorably during World War II and the Korean War. During his later years, he lived a much gentler life with his second wife, Lupie, in Concord, California. He drove a laundry truck, and, after a car struck a child on his block, Jenkins took up the role of friendly neighborhood crossing guard. A traffic light was erected where Jenkins spent his mornings helping school children cross the street; it was forever known as "The Lew Jenkins Light."

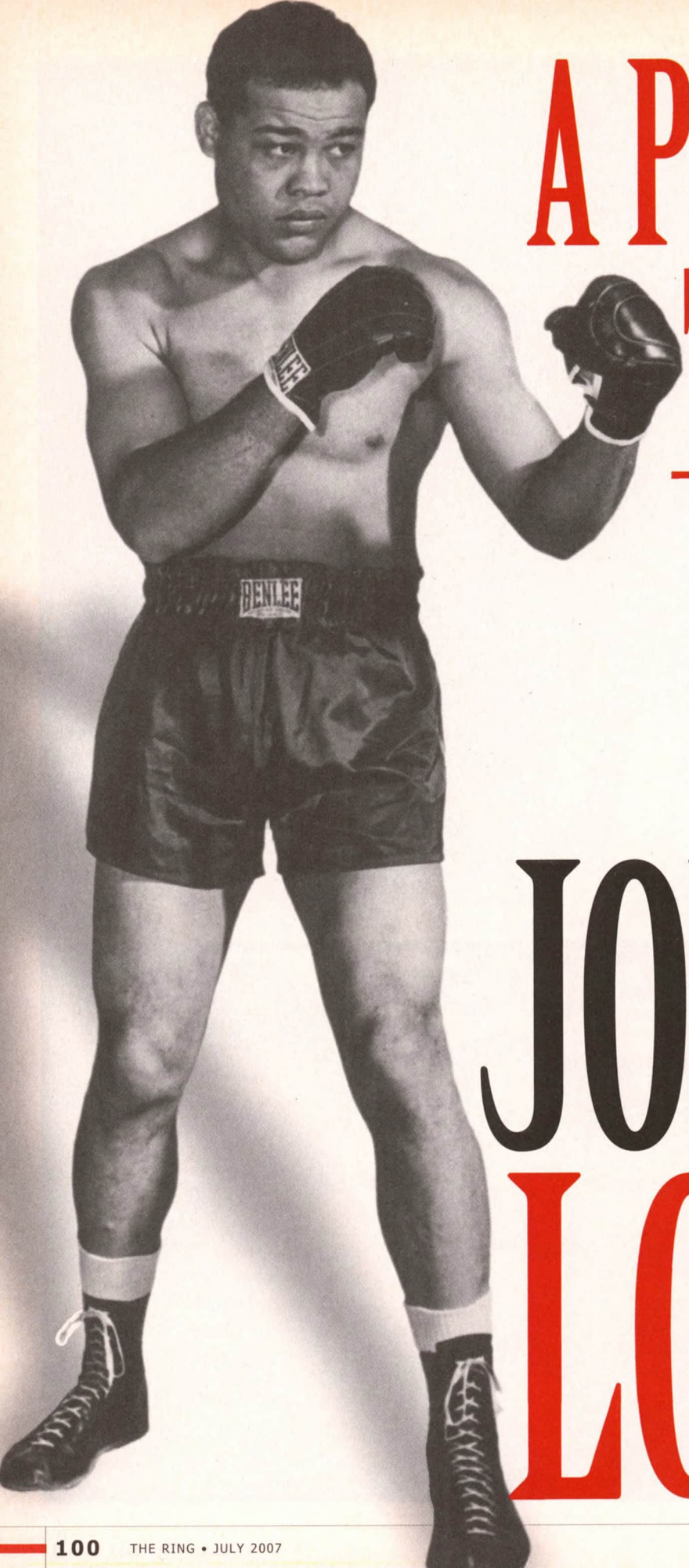
Mayorga, too, has shown a kinder nature along with his reckless side. He once gave $100,000 to Santa Rosa de Los Pareles, a rough village near Managua, to provide electricity for



Heavy-hitting Lew Jenkins, who often sipped whiskey between rounds, knocked out Lou Ambers to win the lightweight title (above), but didn't hold the title for long. Later in life, Jenkins cleaned up his act and served with distinction in the U.S. Army. That's his son, Lew Jr., planting one on his dad's chin (right) in 1963. The ex-champ had had just returned home following a tour of duty in Germany.

streetlights. Maybe he'll wake up in time to turn his career around, as other wild types have done. Hopefully, Scott Harrison, recently diagnosed with OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), can turn things around too. Harrison and Mayorga aren't likely to become crossing guards, but it would be a shame if they've already chased themselves out of the big-time. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.



A Pictorial Tribute

JOE LOUIS

Nickname: The Brown Bomber

Birthdate: May 13, 1914

Birthplace: Lafayette, Alabama

Weight Class: Heavyweight

Height: 6'1½"

Professional Record: 68-3 (54)

Titles: World heavyweight (June 22, 1937-March 1, 1949)

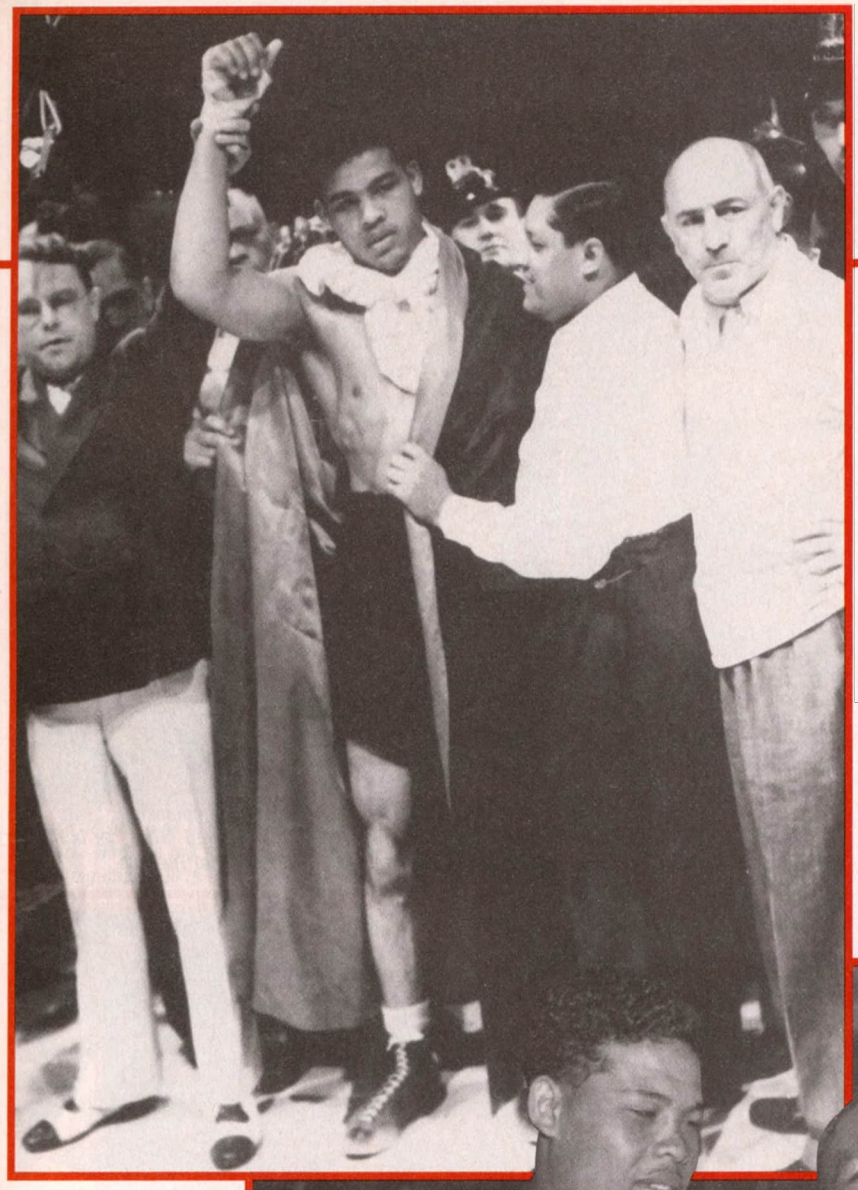
Best Performances: James J. Braddock (KO 8), Max Schmeling (KO 1), Tony Galento (KO 4), Billy Conn (KO 13), Max Baer (KO 4), Buddy Baer (KO 1), Jersey Joe Walcott (KO 11)

Year of IBHOF Induction: 1990

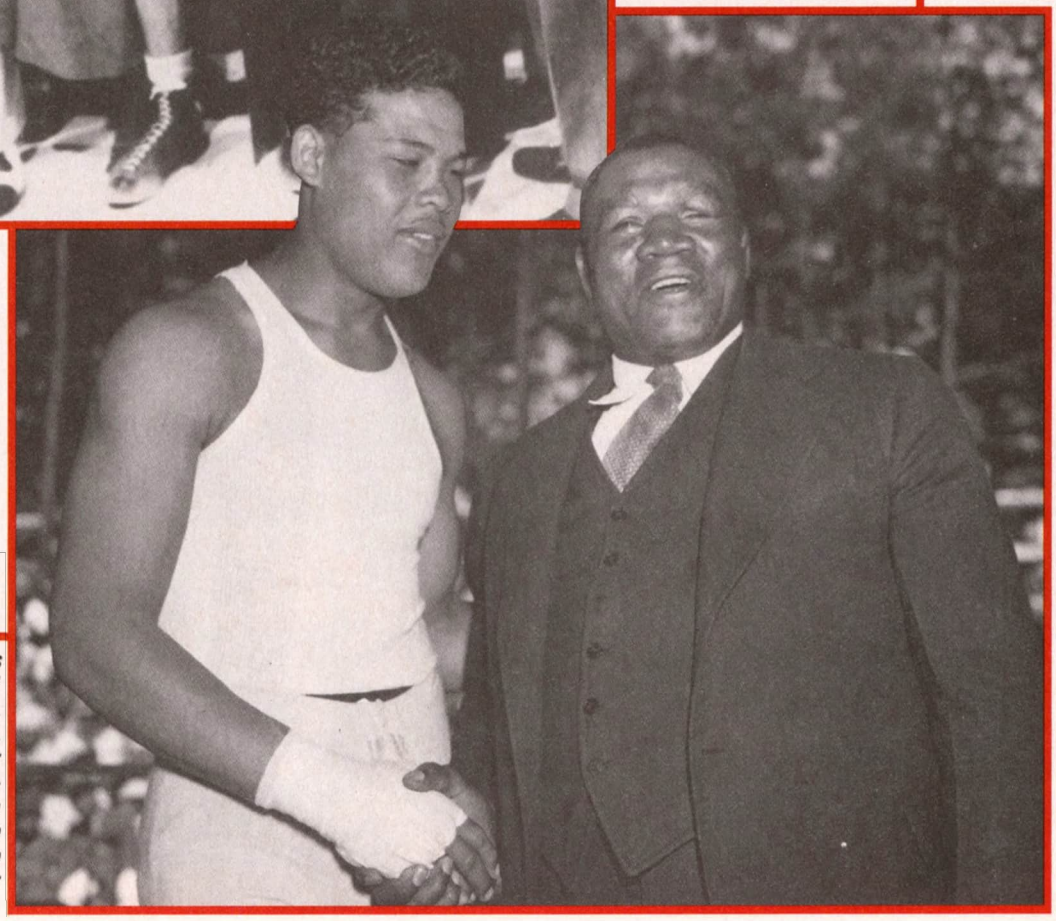
Background: The son of a penniless sharecropper who ended up in an insane asylum, Louis went on to become one of the most beloved sports figures of the 20th century, an American hero who thrilled millions with his ring exploits while helping improve race relations in the pre-Civil Rights era ... Moved to Detroit with his mother when he was 12 and began boxing at age 17 ... Capped an outstanding amateur career by winning the 1934 AAU light heavyweight championship and turned pro the same year ... Managed by Julian Black and John Roxborough, and trained by former lightweight standout Jack Blackburn, the murderous-punching "Brown Bomber" was recognized as a very special fighter early in his career ... Made his New York City debut in just his 19th pro fight, handing ex-champ Primo Carnera a savage beating in front of more than 60,000 fans at Yankee Stadium ... Suffered his first setback the following year, when Max Schmeling knocked him out in the 12th round of a non-title fight ... Rebounded to capture the heavyweight title by knocking out Jim Braddock in the eighth round in '37 ... There followed record-setting 25 successful defenses of the heavyweight title (including a first-round kayo of Schmeling in one of the most famous fights of all-time) that has yet to be broken ... Was still champion when World War II interrupted his career for more than three years ... After serving in the U.S. Army, returned to action in '46 and tallied his final four defenses before announcing his retirement in March '49 ... Tax trouble forced a comeback the following year, but the aging Louis was unable to regain the crown and retired for good after being knocked out by future champ Rocky Marciano ... There have been several movies made about Louis' life, including *The Joe Louis Story*, starring boxer Coley Wallace ... Louis also appeared in a number of films, including *This Is The Army*, *The Fight That Never Ends*, and *Johnny At The Fair* ... Named THE RING magazine's Fighter of the Year in 1936, '38, '39, and '41 ... Was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 1982, the highest award given by the U.S. legislative branch.

Louis gives the victory sign following his third-round TKO of former heavyweight champion Jack Sharkey in August 1936. On the left is Hall of Fame trainer Jack Blackburn, the former lightweight contender who is credited with helping develop Louis' lethal style.

Louis weighs in for his August 1935 fight with King Levinski, who lasted less than a round with the future heavyweight champ. Even wearing those spiffy two-tone shoes, Joe weighed only 197¾ pounds.

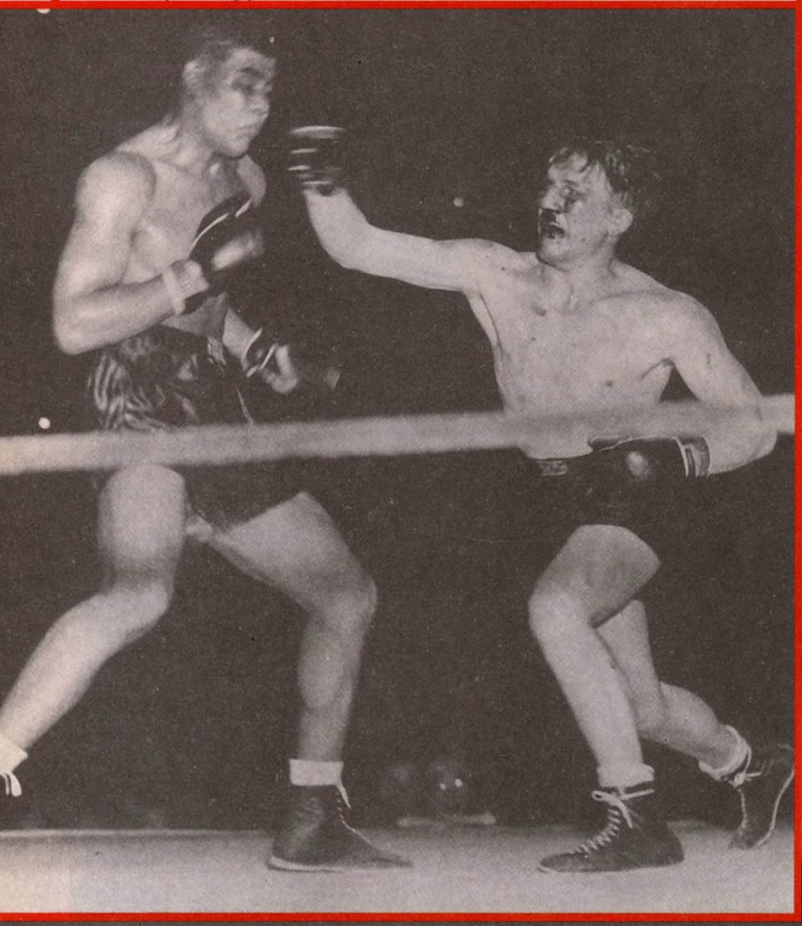


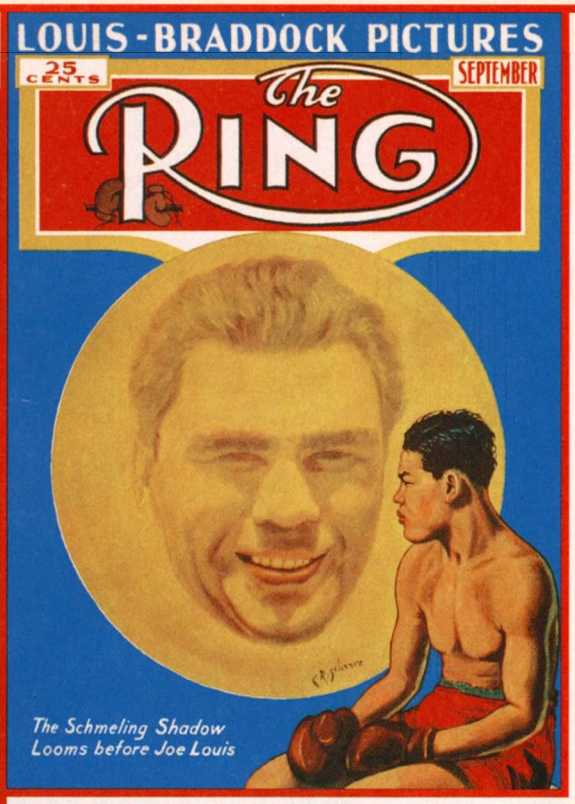
Louis' arm is raised in victory following his title-winning, eighth-round knockout of Jim Braddock in Chicago. It was the beginning of an amazing reign that lasted until March 1949 and made Louis a household name around the world.



"The Brown Bomber" greets Sam Langford at Louis' Lakewood, New Jersey, training camp. Langford, arguably the greatest fighter to never win a world championship, fought in an era when black fighters were routinely shut out of the title picture because of the color of their skin.

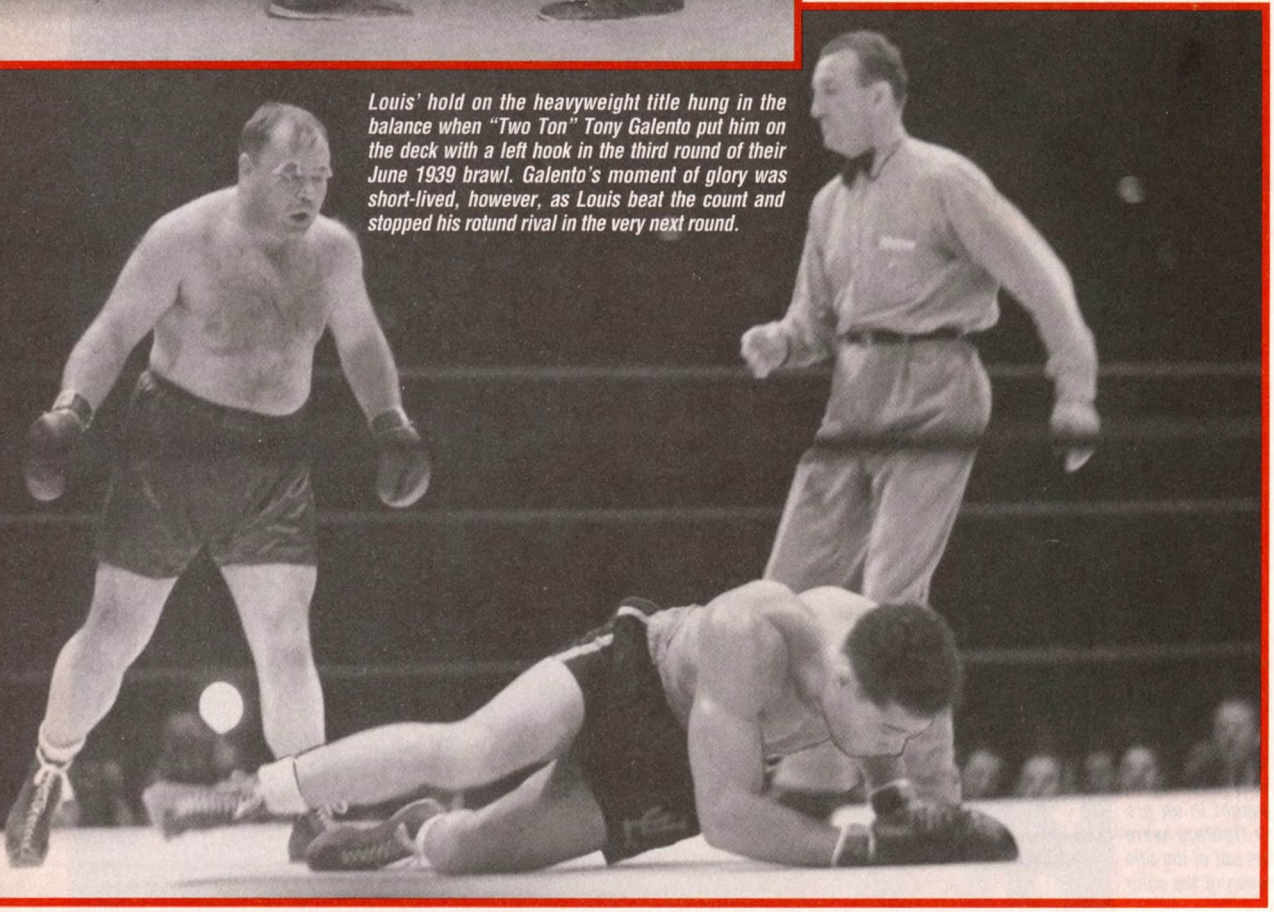
A blood-smeared Tommy Farr fires a right at Louis during the champ's first defense. The tough and cagey Welshman gave Louis one of his toughest fights, but lacked the punching power to take the title and lost a 15-round decision.



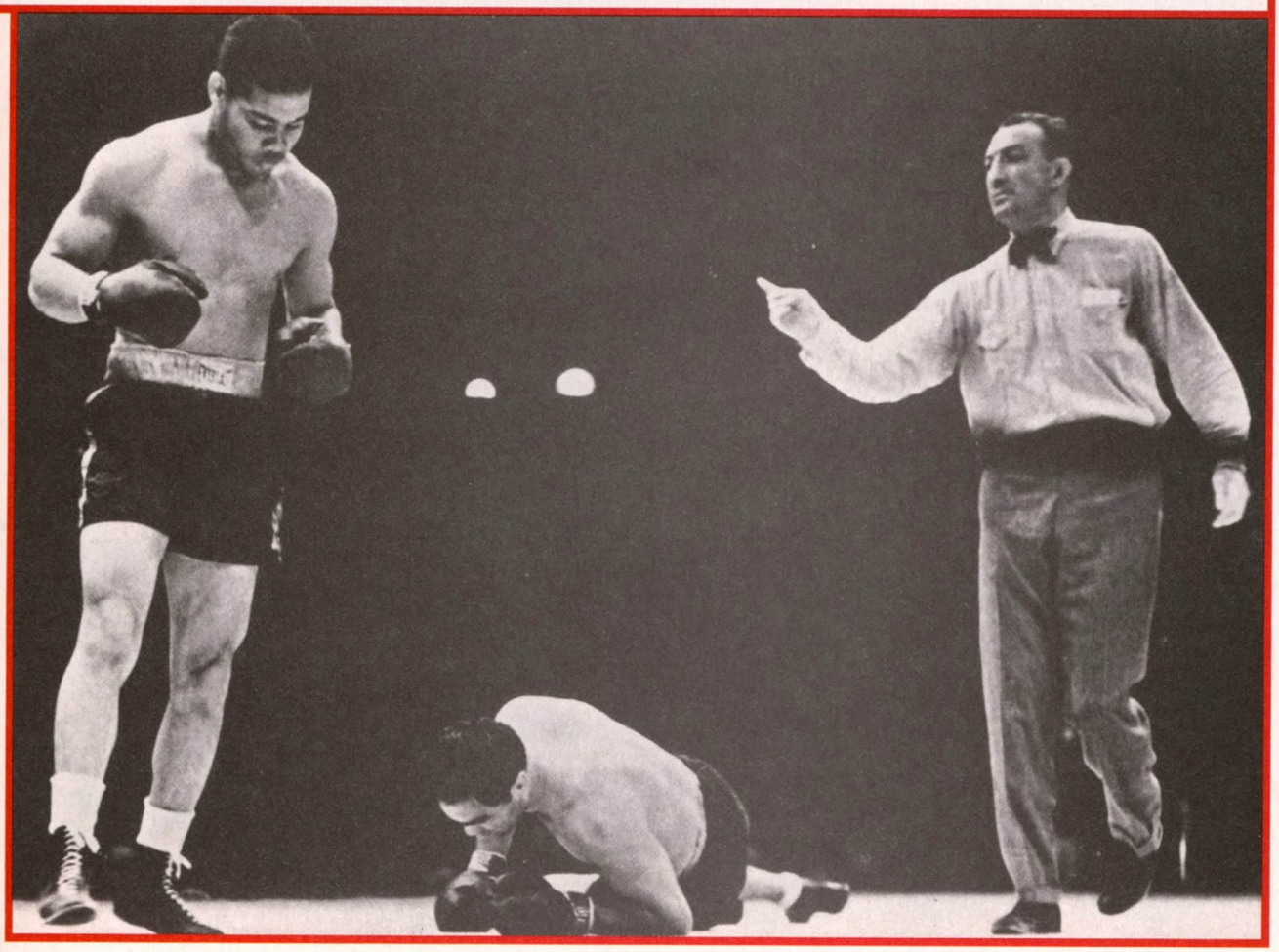


Even after he won the heavyweight championship, Louis' 1936 knockout loss to Max Schmeling loomed large, as is clearly illustrated by the September 1937 cover of THE RING.

Louis' hold on the heavyweight title hung in the balance when "Two Ton" Tony Galento put him on the deck with a left hook in the third round of their June 1939 brawl. Galento's moment of glory was short-lived, however, as Louis beat the count and stopped his rotund rival in the very next round.



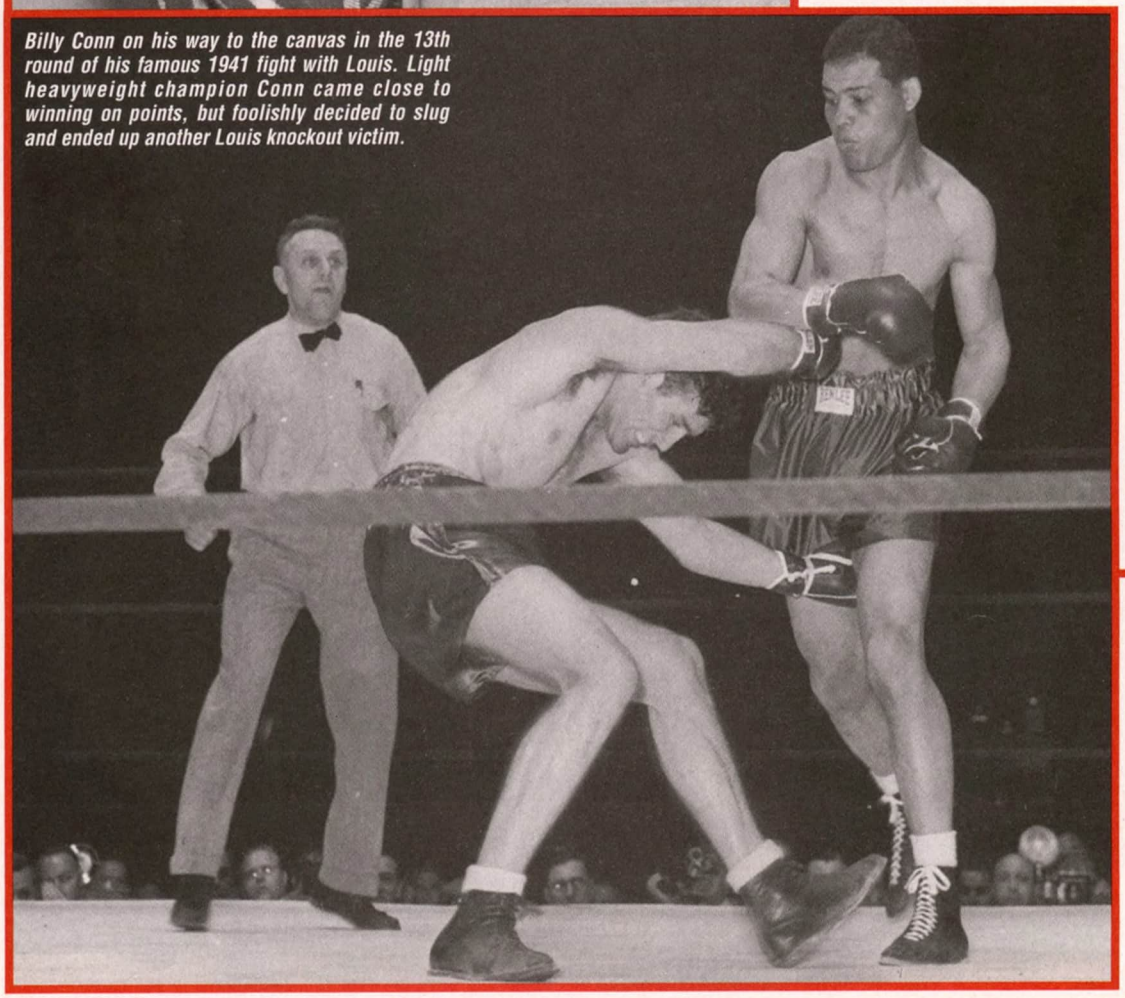
Close to 80,000 fans jammed Yankee Stadium for Louis' 1939 rematch with Schmeling. The bout was full of political and symbolic overtones because the Nazis were on the march in Europe and Schmeling was German. It turned out to be a blowout, when Louis dished out such a horrific beating. Schmeling ended up in the hospital after less than three minutes of fighting.



Louis in a clinch with actress Edna Mae Harris during the filming of The Spirit Of Youth, *motion picture that starred Louis and was purported to be based on his life.*

Louis shares the cover of the March 1939 issue of THE RING *with triple champ Henry Armstrong. Armstrong had been the magazine's Fighter of the Year in '37, while Louis took top honors in '38. They were the sport's two biggest box-office attractions.*

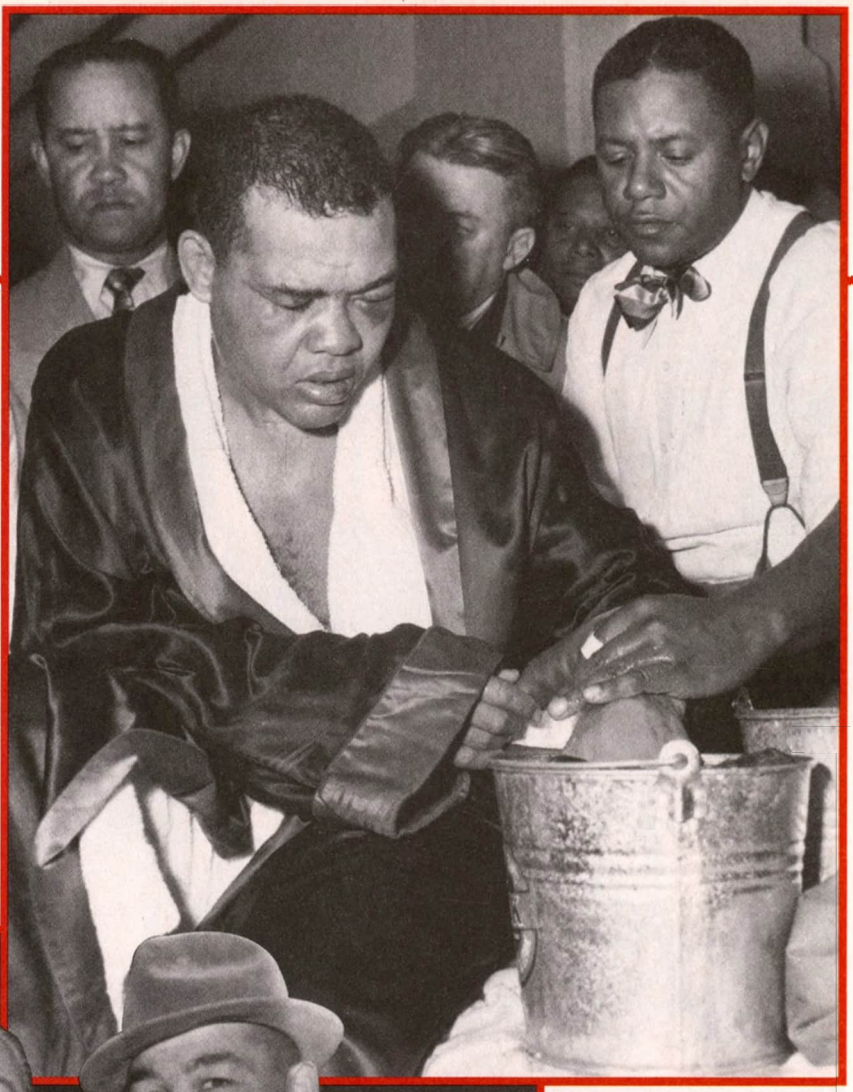
Billy Conn on his way to the canvas in the 13th round of his famous 1941 fight with Louis. Light heavyweight champion Conn came close to winning on points, but foolishly decided to slug and ended up another Louis knockout victim.



Promoter Mike Jacobs and Louis at Joe's Pompton Lakes, New Jersey, training camp. The pair made a fortune together, with the big difference being that Jacobs did a much better job of hanging on to his money.

Lee Savold crumbles to the floor in the sixth and final round of his June 1951 bout with Louis. It was one of Joe's last major wins. Four months later, Rocky Marciano kayoed the comebacking ex-champ and ended his career.

A bruised and battered Louis soaks his left hand in a bucket of ice following his loss to Marciano in October '51. Although Louis would box exhibitions and even wrestle briefly over the next few years, it was his final official bout.



Former foes Tony Galento and Max Baer hang out with Louis in 1955. The trio was in New York City to attend the heavyweight title bout between Rocky Marciano and Archie Moore.

Louis presents TV personality Merv Griffin with a Caesars Palace golfing hat. The former champ spent a number of his later years working in a p.r. capacity for the Las Vegas casino.

PHOTO BY JOHN BIALE

The Joe Louis Memorial Park in Pompton Lakes, where The Brown Bomber trained for many of his major fights.

Summary

Heavyweights

Wladimir Klitschko KO 2 Ray Austin
(Retains IBF Title)
Calvin Brock KO 1 Ralph West
Evander Holyfield KO 3
Vinny Maddalone
Luan Krasniqi W 12 Brian Minto
Michael Moorer W 10 Sedreck Fields
Ashanti Jordan KO 1 Eric Molina
Sultan Ibragimov KO 1 Javier Mora
Roman Greenberg W 10 Michael Simms
Tommy Morrison KO 2 John Castle
Joe Mesi KO 1 George Linberger
David Tua W 10 Robert Hawkins
Danny Williams KO 9 Scott Gammer
Oliver McCall W 8 Marion Wilson
Bruce Seldon KO 2 Jay Sweetman
Shane Cameron KO 8 Bob Mirovic
Timo Hoffmann KO 4 Konstantin Onofrei
Rene Dettweiler KO 4 Tipton Walker
Awadh Tamimu KO 3 Shabani Tampa
Alexander Povetkin KO 2 David Bostice

Cruiserweights

Jean Marc Mormeck W 12 O'Neil Bell
(*Regains World Championship*)
Johnathon Banks KO 1 Ralf Riemer
Darnell Wilson KO 3 Kelvin Davis
Troy Ross KO 2 John Keaton
B.J. Flores W 12 Patrick Nwamu
Pawel Kolodziej W 12 Armen Azizian
Alexander Gurov W 12 Shaun George
Anthony McCracken KO 8
Damien Smith
Hector Avila KO 5 Hector Sotelo
Valery Volozhenin KO 5
Sherzod Mamadzhanov

Light Heavyweights

Zach Walters KO 2 Preston Kenney
Seifudin Barakhoev KO 1
Andrey Yalunin
DeAndrey Abron KO 5 John Turner

Super Middleweights

Alejandro Berrio KO 3 Robert Stieglitz
(*Wins Vacant IBF Title*)
Anthony Mundine KO 9 Sam Soliman
Denis Inkin KO 7 Emmanuel Duma
Jean Pascal W 12 Lafarrell Bunteng
Kreshnick Qato W 12
Alexander Zaitsev
Alexander Awdijan W 12
Bernard Donfack
Neil Tidman W 10 Jonjo Finnegan
David Banks W 10 Elvin Ayala
Benson Mwakyembe KO 8
Karama Nyilawila
Jose Varela KO 2
Nurhan Suleymanoglu
Les Sherrington Tech. Win 9
Sonni Michael
Tarvis Simms W 8 Daniel Stanisavljevic

Middleweights

Edison Miranda W 10 Allan Green
Sebastian Sylvester KO 12
Alessio Furlan
John Duddy Tech. Win 9
Anthony Bonsante
Cleveland Corder W 12 Zane Marks
Joey Gilbert W 12 Michi Munoz
Bronco McKart W 8 Ted Muller
Cedric Charlier W 12 Douglas Bellini
Walid Smichet KO 10 Matt O'Brien
Steve Ede W 10 Conroy McIntosh
Koji Sato KO 9 Adam Vella
Paul Smith KO 8 Alexander Polizzi
Juan De la Rosa KO 5 Victor Lares
Giovanni Lorenzo KO 2 Robert Kamya
Rocky Junior KO 2
Alex De Oliveira Marques
Andy Kolle KO 1 Corey Budd

Junior Middleweights

Ivan Gontsa W 12 Vladimir Borovski
Christophe Canclaux W 12
Jaume Pons
Stephane Desormiers D 10
Ian MacKillop
Jimmy Colas W 10 Alban Mothie
Yuki Nonaka W 10 Ryuichi Kuwana
Rogerio Pereira W 10 Luciano Souza
Shannan Taylor KO 4
Dechapon Suwunnalird
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 3
Raul Munoz
Jozsef Matolcsi KO 8
Koba Karkashadze
Kuvanych Toygonbayev KO 8
Akhmed Oligov
Selemani Said KO 8 Abdallah Nyuki
Mehdi Nekaies W 8 Khalil Lahdili
Reda Zam Zam W 8 Maxim Nesterenko
Zapir Gereev KO1 Omar Siala

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/IRISH ROPES

Middleweight John Duddy zeroes in on Anthony Bonsante

Welterweights

Miguel Cotto KO 11 Oktay Urkal
(Retains WBA Title)
James De La Rosa W 10
Francisco Rincon
Cristian Bejarano KO 8
Arnold Gamboa
Mike Jones KO 2
Francisco Maldonado
Jackson Osei Bonsu KO 8
Nordine Mouchi
Anton Solopov KO 5 Hassan Saku
Kaenkart Chuwatana KO 3
Tsukasa Kashiwagi
Anthony Martinez KO 2 Jesus Villareal
Frederic Klose W 8 Carlos Donquiz

Junior Welterweights

Souleymane M'baye D 12
Andreas Kotelnik
(Retains WBA Title)
Fedele Bellusci W 12 Cristian Frias
Demetrius Hopkins W 12 Steve Forbes
Enrique Colin W 10 Michael Stewart
Sergio Benitez W 10 Vicente Rodriguez
Ramon Guevara KO 4 Jorge Paez Jr.
Devon Alexander KO 7 Scott Ball
Yoshihiro Kamegai KO 3 Akinori Suzuki
Samuel Malinga KO 1
Thulani Mkhwanazi
Edgar Santana W 8
Dairo Jose Esalas
Verquan Kimbrough W 6 Dean White

Lightweights

Nate Campbell W 12 Ricky Quiles
Tomoya Matsuda W 10
Minenao Shimada
Ceri Hall KO 9 Stuart Green
Carlos Urias KO 8
Ricardo Dominguez
Javier Castro KO 8 Mario Ramirez
Akira Yamazaki KO 7
Tosho Makoto Aoki
Daniel Brizuela KO 5
Alexander Tanchiva
Damian Owen KO 4 Dean Phillips
Richard Abril KO 1 Derrick Samuels
Jean Weigel W 8 Pierre Bonicel

Junior Lightweights

Manuel Marquez W 12
Marco Antonio Barrera
(Wins WBC Title)
Yasuki Takemoto W 10
Yoshio Kojima
Humberto Soto KO 3 Humberto Toledo
Jimrex Jaca KO 7 Simson Butar Butar
Kevin Mitchell KO 6 Harry Ramogoadi
Gabriel Phakula KO 4 Peter Adams
Rikiya Fukuhara KO 3 Yuki Wisut
Satoshi Hosono KO 1
Petchthongkam Sithprakaifah
Kazuyuki Irie W 8 Haruki Tsuchiya
Sohei Yoneyama W 8
Payatol Twins Special
Leon Bobo W 8 Jesus Salvador Perez

Featherweights

Chris John W 12 Jose Rojas
(Retains WBA Title)
Robert Guerrero KO 9 Spend Abazi
Johnny Tapia W 10 Evaristo Primero
Cruz Carbajal D 10 Eric Aiken
Mario Santiago KO 9 Daniel Attah
Elio Rojas W 10 Johnnie Edwards
Derry Matthews W 12 John Simpson
Shoji Kimura W 10 Masaki Miya
Takahiro Aoh W 10 Koji Umezu
Yuya Miyagi W 10
Boonmee Vidhaykhon
Leigh Lindgren W 8 Samart Twingym
Junior Farzan Ali KO 8 Etuate Kofi
Marlon Aguilar KO 5 Carlos Velasquez
Choi Tseveenpurev KO 4
Nikoloz Berkatsashvili
Eduardo Escobedo KO 3 Edel Ruiz
Joel Consulta KO 3
Mongkolnoi Polkurahan
Makyo Sugita KO 2
Runktawan Sor Vorapin
Alex Escaner KO 2 Akio Konishi
Kenichi Ogata KO 1
Kazuhiro Yamamoto
Orlando Cruz KO 1 Francisco Huerta

Junior Featherweights

Rafael Marquez KO 7 Israel Vazquez
(Wins World Championship)
Celestino Caballero W Disq. 9
Ricardo Castillo
(Retains WBA Title)
Daniel Ponce De Leon W 12
Gerry Penalosa
Oscar Chauke W 12
Sprinkaan Khongoane
Fernando Beltran W 10
Baudel Cardenas
Rey Bautista KO 3 Marino Gonzalez
Juan Manuel Lopez KO 2 Leivi Brea
Alejandra Oliveras D 10 Jackie Nava

Bantamweights

Wladimir Sidorenko D 12
Ricardo Cordoba
(Retains WBA Title)
Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym KO 4
Almaz Assanov
Simone Maludrottu W 12 Ian Napa
Kohei Ohba W 10 Kaona Klongpajol
Karim Quibir Lopez W 10
Jean Marie Codet
Abner Mares KO 8 Robert Allanic
Raul Martinez W 8 Kevin Hudgins
Diasdado Gabi KO 2
Antonio Cochero
Takuro Kodama KO 4 Ken Oshika
Mikio Yasuda KO 4 Kwang Hi Lee
Yasuhito Aritomi KO 2
Yusuke Morishima

Junior Bantamweights

Fernando Montiel W 12 Z Gorres
Cecilio Santos Tech. Win 11
Luis Melendez
Julio Ler W 10 Jose Garcia Bernal
Zolile Mbityi KO 5 Simon Ramoni
Hassan Naji KO 2 Christian Ferchi
Yo Sam Choi KO 1
Pradabsri Siwagon

Flyweights

Vic Darchinyan KO 12 Victor Burgos
(Retains IBF Title)
Takefumi Sakata KO 3 Lorenzo Parra
(Wins WBA Title)
Omar Narvaez W 12 Brahim Asloum
Jojo Bardon W 12
Masaharu Naganawa
Sergio Espinoza W 10
Juan Alberto Rosas
Marlon Pineda W 10 Oscar Murillo
Shunichi Matsunobu KO 5
Jitsuo Mizokami
Cesar Seda Jr. KO 2 Wilmer Suarez
Zolani Tete KO 1 Vuyo Toyise

Junior Flyweights

Manuel Vargas W 12 Juan Esquer
Juan Carlos Reveco KO 7
Adrian Dimas Garzon

Strawweights

Toshikazu Waga KO 2
Chansaknoi Sakrungruang
Changsaknoi Sakrungruan KO 1
Shoryu Reiji

Wladimir Klitschko KO 2 Ray Austin

Mannheim, Germany: All the controversy over gloves, judges, rules, and "trickeration" was made irrelevant by Klitschko's iron fists, as the world's leading heavyweight obliterated overmatched mandatory challenger Austin, 247, Cleveland, Ohio, inside two rounds at the SAP Arena. "It was easy," said Klitschko, 246½, Kiev, Ukraine. "Austin was slower than my sparring partners." That just about said it all.

The 30-year-old holder of the IBF belt has rebuilt himself impressively since suffering devastating stoppage defeats at the hands of Corrie Sanders and Lamon Brewster in 2003 and 2004, respectively. This is no glorious era for heavyweight boxing, but Klitschko at least offers a glimmer of respectability in all the wasteland. He dealt with Austin in the ruthless manner one would expect of a man with aspirations of succeeding his brother, Vitali, and Lennox Lewis as the natural ruler of his domain. Lewis and the elder Klitschko shared the ring earlier in the night, but only to confirm that there will be no rematch of their 2003 heavyweight title fight, which Lewis won on cuts after six rounds. Vitali's comeback will continue unabated, but in the meantime we are left with matchups like this, one that Austin had not the remotest chance of winning.

Nonetheless, the prefight shenanigans over the type of gloves that the boxers wished to wear—Klitschko's choice of Grant gloves had been contractually pre-determined but Austin was eventually obliged to wear the same, instead of Reyes gloves, as a result of a coin toss—and the selection of judges and a row over the local commission suggested that ground rules were being laid for the eruption of World War III. The reality was the briefest of one-sided skirmishes. All Klitschko, 48-3 (43), had to do was jab his way almost nonchalantly through the opening round, then reveal just a hint of his arsenal in the second round to render Austin, 24-4-4 (16), a compliant victim. A left hook to the chin precipitated the 36-year-old American's downfall, and a quick battery of three more left hooks ended it when referee Eddie Cotton intervened at the 1:23 mark. It was as straightforward as that.

"I didn't choose this opponent," Klitschko emphasized, exposing the folly of the sanctioning body that elevated Austin to number-one contender on the strength of a 12-round draw against Sultan Ibragimov last year.

Klitschko also revealed that he would like to stage a unification bout with the giant Russian, WBA beltholder Nicolay Valuev. "I hope that I can move on now to this fight against Nicolay, as I believe he wishes for this fight, just like me," he said. "It is a fight that the public wish to see as well, so I would like this to be my next fight."

Valuev, who was scheduled to face his mandatory challenger, unbeaten Ruslan Chagaev, on April 14 at the Porsche Arena in Stuttgart, declared: "I am focused on Chagaev for now, but, yes, in the future I would love to fight Wladimir Klitschko and I see no reason why it cannot happen."

It won't be Ali-Frazier, but it should be better than Klitschko-Austin.

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **K2 Promotions**
(3-10-07)
Brian Doogan

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Austin is easily dispatched by Klitschko

Vic Darchinyan KO 12 Victor Burgos

Carson, California: Burgos was too tough for his own good—an old, too-familiar story. The former 108-pound titlist was the sixth challenger for Darchinyan's flyweight title, and looked much smaller than the IBF beltholder. The only question was whether the freakishly powerful Darchinyan, an Armenian native who lives in Sydney, Australia, could finish him off before the final bell.

The feat was achieved late, when referee Jon Schorle (USA) finally stopped the contest at 1:27 of the last scheduled round. The 32-year-old Burgos, falling in and out of consciousness after the stoppage, was wheeled out on a

gurney. Doctors at the hospital diagnosed a blood clot on the brain and rushed him into surgery. Afterward he was put into a medically induced coma. A report in the *Long Beach Press Telegram* said he was eventually pulled out of the coma and was responding to commands, but his condition was critical and his prognosis uncertain as of press time.

Most rounds of this mismatch looked the same—southpaw slugger Darchinyan, 111½, crouching, stalking, and not looking terribly professional as he threw big lefts and used his right hand sparingly against an opponent who moved away. Burgos, 111¼, Puebla, Mexico, looking increasingly hurt and desperate, fell to the canvas several times. Except for a knockdown in round two, the rest were ruled slips.

In round 12, Burgos, 39-15-3 (23), after rising from yet another fall ruled a slip, staggered uncertainly and was hit with a left as Schorle jumped between the fighters.

When the *L.A. Times* reported the life-threatening injury and emergency brain surgery 13 miles south of its newsroom, it did so in one paragraph inside the "Miscellany" column on Page 8 of the sports section. The item followed a paragraph reporting the result of a surfing competition in Australia.

The 31-year-old Darchinyan, 28-0 (22), said he wants to

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Darchinyan nails Burgos with a right

[THE RING Fighter of the Month]

Presented by EVERLAST BOXING EQUIPMENT EST.1910 BRONX, NEW YORK

Rafael Marquez

In the most famous clash ever between a junior featherweight and a bantamweight, the 1978 match between 122-pound king Wilfredo Gomez and 118-pound boss Carlos Zarate, the smaller champion was dismantled by the bigger champion, Gomez prevailing inside five rounds. Was Gomez better or was he just bigger? That question can still be debated today. But there is no debate about Rafael Marquez vs. Israel Vazquez, because the smaller man prevailed and, aside from one punch that made the fight appear much closer on the cards than it really was, bantamweight beltholder Marquez pretty much dominated world junior featherweight champion Vazquez.

In the third round, Marquez walked into a perfect left uppercut, hitting the canvas for the first time in his career. But other than that one brief moment, his pinpoint punching, boxing smarts, faster hands, and defensive radar kept him a step ahead of Vazquez throughout. He bloodied Vazquez' nose in the first and broke it a few rounds later, leading to a Vazquez surrender after the seventh.

Many expected a great fight, but instead, because of the anticlimactic ending, it was merely a good fight. We did, however, get a great performance out of Marquez—and it's getting harder and harder to remember the last time he gave a performance that was anything less.

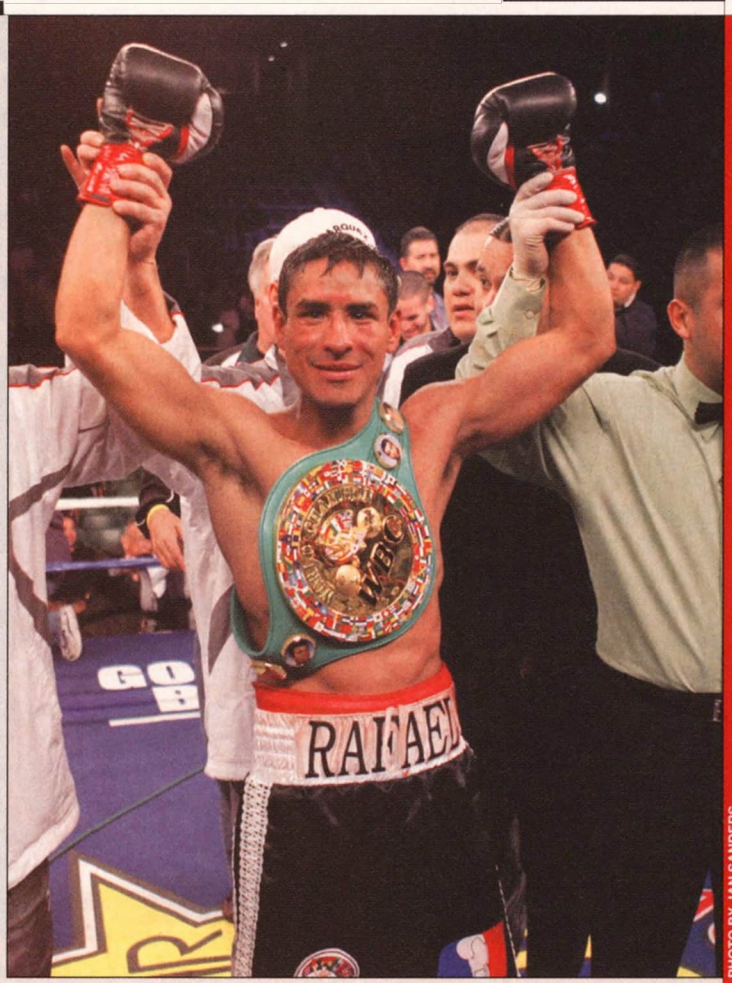


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

PHOTO BY ADEK BERRY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

John and Rojas exchange headshots

challenge the winner of a tentative rematch between Rafael Marquez, the new RING junior featherweight champion, and Israel Vazquez. He'd be skipping over two weight divisions, which might be what it takes to find an opponent who can punch harder than he can.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoters: **Gary Shaw Productions, Sycuan Promotions, Don King Productions**
(3-3-07)
Ivan Goldman

Chris John W 12 Jose Rojas

Jakarta, Indonesia: In a rematch to an inconclusive first fight, Indonesia's John successfully defended the WBA featherweight belt for the seventh consecutive time (though only the second time since winning a disputed decision over Juan Manuel Marquez to become more than just the non-"super" titleholder), as he earned a hard-fought, 12-round decision over Jose "Cheo" Rojas of Venezuela.

The pair first fought in December 2004, only to have the bout halted in the fourth round because of a cut caused by a clash of heads. The fight was declared a technical draw and they both have been longing for a rematch ever since.

Rojas, 35, had just two weeks of training for their first encounter; he reportedly had four months of preparation this time around and vowed the fight would not go the distance. "Round four, maximum five rounds," he declared.

When the 27-year-old John, THE RING'S top rated featherweight, defeated Marquez a year ago, he did so by using his considerable boxing skills—decent hand speed, combination punching, good footwork, and an abundance of head movement. This time around, he morphed into a slugger, much to the dismay of his corner.

Rojas, 126, came out of the gate quickly, winging wild, overhand rights and startling the beltholder with his aggression. For his part, John, 125½, eagerly fired back, countering sharply with straight rights and looping lefts. Midway through the round, Rojas landed a crunching right uppercut that rattled the Indonesian, and the battle was on.

John seemed determined to prove he could stand toe-to-toe with the Venezuelan, and Rojas was more than happy to turn the contest in to a back-alley brawl. His attack continued until a counter right hand from John bounced him to the canvas in the second round. More embarrassed than hurt, Rojas turned and gave referee Derek Milham (Australia) a look of disgust. Moments later, though, John landed a huge right hook that staggered the challenger and had him hanging on until the round ended.

With the cheers of "Chris John, Chris John, Chris John" resonating in the background, the torrid pace continued. In round four, a flurry of punches from John knocked Rojas to the canvas again, but the knockdown was more because of the slippery mat than the effect of the blows. Although unhurt, Rojas suffered a small cut in the exchange.

Rojas got back on track in the following round with his right uppercut and left hook; midway through the round, he landed a looping left that stunned John, but once again he was unable to capitalize.

By the seventh, the back-and-forth exchanges had begun to take their toll and the pace slowed. An unintentional headbutt two rounds later caused a nasty gash above the left eye of John and slowed the Indonesian—but only temporarily.

Rojas, 23-6-1 (15) with 1 no-contest, was fading by the 11th and, for the first time, backpedaling. John, 39-0-1 (20), sensing his chance for a knockout, mustered one final charge, but was unable to finish the plucky challenger.

All three judges scored in favor of John. Francisco Martinez (New Zealand) had it 118-108, Levi Martinez (USA) scored it 117-107, and Uriel Aguilera (Colombia) saw it 116-110. THE RING scored it 116-110.

Manager/trainer Craig Christian took the blame for John's willingness to brawl.

"We had some great sparring partners from the U.S. scheduled to come over, and due to some visa and flight problems, it didn't happen," Christian said. "So we used some local boys instead. Chris was able to stand in front of them and get away with it. So I take the blame for his doing

so in this fight. We learned a lot from this. You're only as good as your sparring partners, and the next time, we will spare no expense to get the very best."

Promoter: **AMW Promotion**

(3-3-07)

Scott Mallon

Lovemore Ndou KO II Naoufel Ben Rabah

***Sydney, Australia*:** There was plenty of trash talk between Ndou and Ben Rabah in the lead-up to their junior welterweight contest, headlining an afternoon card at the State Sports Centre in Olympic Park, and the action lived up to every single word. The fight was an IBF eliminator, and it retroactively became a title fight when the strip-happy organization saw fit to relieve legitimate 140-pound world champion Ricky Hatton of his belt for taking a major fight against Jose Luis Castillo rather than a minor fight against the winner of this bout.

The first two rounds were predictable with Ndou, 139, trying to set the pace while Ben Rabah, 140, was content to move on the outside and use his fast hand speed and punches from angles to win the rounds. Tunisia-born Ben Rabah who resides in Perth, Australia, was fighting with his hands down in round two, such was his confidence, but fast hooks from the South Africa-born Ndou, fighting out of Sydney, saw him have the better of exchanges in round three, as he quickened the pace.

The 35-year-old Ndou was pressuring in round four, but Ben Rabah's bodywork was significant too. Ndou's hand speed was sizzling in round five, as Ben Rabah was just happy to jab softly repeatedly. Switching from orthodox to southpaw and vice versa in round six, Ben Rabah was punching fast, but Ndou's bodywork on the inside was slowing him down.

Round seven was the best of the fight. A left hook from Ben Rabah wobbled Ndou, but he refused to go down. Ben Rabah tried to finish him, but Ndou fought back with a right hand and left hook. Ben Rabah landed another left hook, but then went down from a slip. Both men then stood toe to toe, landing vicious punches, whipping the crowd into a frenzy. A series of left hooks and uppercuts from Ben Rabah in round eight all landed, and Ndou was a stationary target, either unwilling or unable to move out of the way. Ben Rabah was on fire, but no matter what he landed, Ndou continued to come forward.

Uppercuts from Ben Rabah, 24-3 (13), in the ninth round scored, prompting Ndou to respond with vicious hooks that appeared to be draining the life from "Chocolata." The 29-year-old Ben Rabah timed his uppercuts in flurries and then backed Ndou into the corner in round 10. Both men were swinging as if it was the final seconds of the fight in what was an early Fight of the Year contender.

It took an eternity for Ben Rabah to leave his corner at the beginning of round 11. Ndou, 45-8-1 (30), continued stalking Ben Rabah, who threw a series of right hands but had nothing left. "The Black Panther" landed a big left hook and a straight right hand and Ben Rabah was wobbly against the ropes, bobbing like a cork on the ocean. There was confusion when referee Pete Podgorski (USA) stopped the action at the bell, as the roars from the crowd had drowned out the sound of the bell for many observers. The boxers were sent to their corners, but Ben Rabah was totally spent and collapsed on his stool, his trainer signaling the end of the contest.

"Not only did I win well," said Ndou, who was ahead on all three judges' scorecards, "I beat a boxer who fought a great fight."

Promoter: **Grange Old School Boxing**

(2-4-07)

Paul Upham

Edison Miranda W 10 Allan Green

San Juan, Puerto Rico: HBO's brass rightly felt that for the co-feature to the uninteresting mandatory defense by Miguel Cotto against Oktay Urkal they needed a competitive matchup with potential fireworks, and nearly everybody agreed they'd succeeded in signing Miranda-Green, a clash of hard-hitting up-and-comers set for a catchweight of 162 pounds. Unfortunately, Green fought cautiously and Miranda sloppily, and aside from a knockdown-filled finish, their 10-rounder at Roberto Clemente Coliseum was mostly a disappointment, with "Pantera" Miranda coming out comfortably ahead.

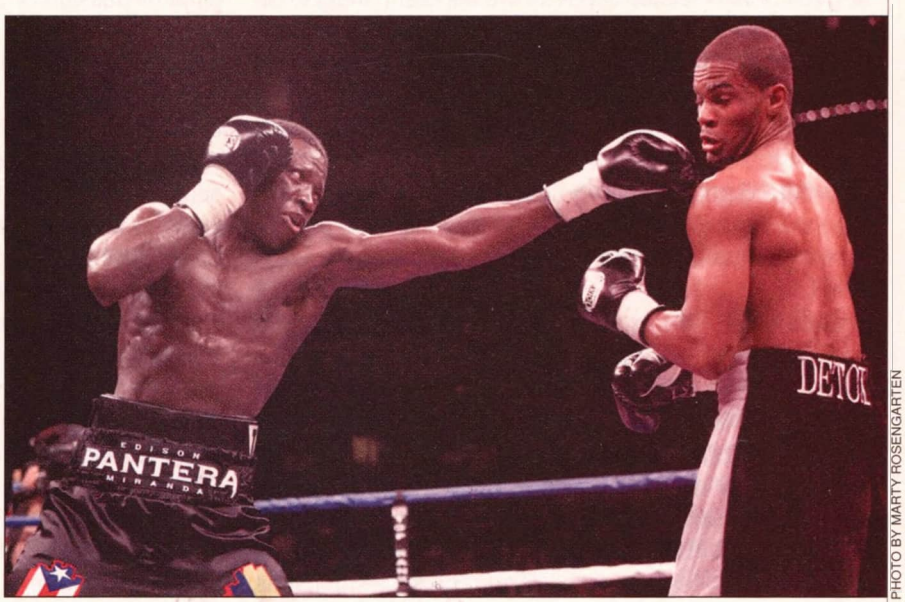


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Miranda has Green looking sideways

Green, 162, Tulsa, Oklahoma, participated in some animated Cory-Spinks-style dancing on his way to the ring, but his energy level dropped precipitously after the bell rang. The reason may have been Green's struggle to come down from super middleweight, or it may have been the hard right hand that Miranda caught him with just a few seconds into the fight. Over the next few rounds, Miranda, 162, Carolina, Puerto Rico, via Buenaventura, Colombia, tried to force the fight and showed a tendency to lead with his head, causing Green to spend more time complaining than throwing punches. "Sweetness" finally got some offense going in the fourth round, when he landed a heavy left hook, gaining the 25-year-old Miranda's attention.

If the fight was mediocre over the course of the first four rounds, it became downright dreadful the next three, and the crowd began booing the ugly clash of styles, mostly the result of the 27-year-old Green's passivity.

But the action took a sudden—and welcome—turn in the eighth, when, from out of nowhere, Green uncorked a big right hand and then a flush left hook 40 seconds into the round, dropping Miranda on his rump. It was somewhat of a balance knockdown, as Miranda's feet were crossed, but it was a clean knockdown just the same, giving Green a 10-8 round and pulling him back into range to win the fight. Unfortunately, he didn't follow up with any urgency, and his rally was brought to a close early in the ninth, when Miranda hurt him with a sudden, short right hand. He spent most of the rest of the round staggering and holding, and Miranda went into the 10th only needing to stay on his feet to win.

But the aggressive Colombian wouldn't be content to win that way, so he came out firing in the final round and hurt Green with a counter right hand. Green struggled to stay up along the ropes, and finally got clocked with another right, dropping to all fours with 30 seconds left in the fight. He rose at Puerto Rican referee Jose H. Rivera's count of eight, but Miranda pounced and scored another right-hand knockdown, Green taking Miranda's trunks down with him as he pitched forward. The Oklahoman rose at the count of nine, and Miranda only had time to land one more punch, a big right hand, before the bell rang.

Judges Samuel Conde (Puerto Rico) and Carlos Colon (Puerto Rico) both scored it 96-91 for Miranda, while Jose R. Torres (Puerto Rico) had it 97-90. THE RING'S scorecard read 97-91.

Green, 23-1 (16), claimed after his first pro loss that his body was weakened making 162 pounds, and indicated he would return to super middle, or maybe even light heavy. Meanwhile, Miranda, 28-1 (24), cleared the way for a huge summer fight against unbeaten banger Kelly Pavlik, with the winner becoming a deserving mandatory challenger to middleweight champion Jermain Taylor.

Promoters: **Top Rank, Main Events, Warriors Boxing, Tony Holden Productions**

(3-3-07)

Vivian Harris W 12 Juan Lazcano

Las Vegas, Nevada: At his best, Harris is a ridiculously rangy destroyer with the weaponry to beat any 140-pounder in the world. At his worst, Harris is fragile, passive, and easily exhausted, in danger of losing to any world-class foe. Against Lazcano on the Shane Mosley-Luis Collazo undercard at the Mandalay Bay Events Center, we saw the best and worst of Harris, and an equally uneven performance from Lazcano, resulting in a close unanimous decision for "Vicious Vivian."

Harris, a 2½-to-1 betting favorite, looked more like a 10-1 fave over the first two rounds, as his jab was beautiful and his powerpunches couldn't miss, the fight starting to look like a lopsided beatdown by the end of the second stanza. Lazcano, 140, El Paso, Texas, was coming off a highly controversial decision win over journeyman Manuel Garnica, and the rumors of "The Hispanic Causing Panic's" demise didn't appear to be exaggerated in the least. But in the third round, he started fighting back, started pressuring Harris, 140, Brooklyn, New York, and had immediate success. Lazcano, 31, was getting inside and digging to Harris' body, and he punctuated the round with a fiery combination. In the fourth, Lazcano started out by absurdly choosing to dance on the outside, allowing Harris, 28, to do good work with his jab, but in the last minute of the round, Lazcano did enough good work returning to his effective strategy of bulling Harris into the ropes that he appeared to steal the round.

The pendulum would swing back in the other direction in rounds five through seven, however. Both fighters did excellent bodywork in the fifth, but Harris' was slightly better. Harris used his jab and potshotted in the sixth, and two long right hands backed Lazcano into the ropes in the seventh, seemingly buzzed. But in the eighth, Harris' stamina started to become a concern, and Lazcano took advantage. He scored with a sudden, heavy right in the eighth, did strong body and head work in close in the ninth, and got the better of a 10th round in which Harris fought with no discipline or passion at all—perhaps because he was utterly devoid of energy.

But with the fight tied up on THE RING'S card, Harris found a second wind in the final two rounds. He jabbed and boxed brilliantly in the 11th, almost unable to miss with the lead left, while Lazcano offered nothing in return. The Texan looked spent in his corner prior to the 12th, and the angle of his uphill climb became steeper when referee Tony Weeks (USA) took a point for a low blow midway through the last round. Many observers felt it was too crucial a juncture of the match for a point deduction, but the shot was blatantly low and Lazcano had been warned previously. Harris jabbed well down the stretch, doing just enough to eke out the round, and with the extra point, THE RING had him on top, 115-112. Judges Chuck Giampa (USA) and Dave Moretti (USA) had it the same way, and Jerry Roth (USA) had Harris on top, 114-113.

The CompuBox stats favored Harris, saying he threw 80 more punches and landed 73 more. Still, it wasn't the Guyana-born Brooklynite's finest performance, and with

PHOTO BY RYAN PIERSE/GETTY IMAGES

Sprott wades into Harrison

Lazcano, 37-4-1 (27), just a borderline top-10 junior welter, it's clear Harris, 28-2-1 (18), has a lot to work on before he can be again considered a serious championship contender.

Television: **HBO**

Promoters: **Golden Boy Promotions, Gary Shaw Productions**

(2-10-07)

Michael Sprott KO 3 Audley Harrison

London, England: Rehabilitated by a third-round knockout last December of Danny Williams, who had outpointed him 12 months earlier, Harrison was talking up a storm once more when Sprott obliterated the 2000 Olympic super heavyweight gold medalist's last illusory hopes of glory at Wembley Arena. A crushing left hook to the jaw at the end of the third round sent Harrison, 254, London, England, to the floor and Sprott, 232½, Reading, England, celebrated as if he had won the world heavyweight title.

The 31-year-old former furniture removal man had lost 10 bouts in an erratic career that included two knockout defeats by Williams and, improbably, a points win in their third match. He lost on points to Paolo Vidoz in a challenge for the European title in 2005 and he was an overwhelming underdog coming in against Harrison. But Harrison's career never took off in a manner befitting an Olympic champion and his defeat by Williams and subsequent points loss against Dominick Guinn had reduced him to damaged goods. Williams appeared to be shot in their rematch, but the 35-year-old southpaw insisted that he was back on course to challenge for one of the cheapened alphabet versions of the world title, though Sprott, 30-10 (15), had different ideas.

Harrison, 21-3 (16), came out assertively in the opening round, measuring his shorter opponent with a rangy right jab to set him up for left crosses and heavy hooks to the body. Before the round was over he floored Sprott with a left to the chin, though Sprott was clear-eyed as he climbed from the canvas and took the mandatory eight-count from referee Ian John Lewis (England). Sprott even managed to back Harrison against the ropes before the round was over. He enjoyed greater success in the second round and, ominously, landed a couple of clean jabs and right hands to Harrison's head.

By the start of the third round, Sprott's confidence was ascendant. A left jab to the chin and successive right hands followed by a series of bodypunches all caught Harrison, who seemed to retreat into a shell when danger beckoned. Then, just before the bell rang to end the third round, Sprott landed a long left hook to the jaw that put Harrison on his back, and the referee did not even need to issue a count because Harrison was out cold. The official time was 3:00. Ironically, this was the very arena where Harrison had launched his pro career amid much fanfare in May 2001 against the private detective from Florida, Mike Middleton.

"Maybe I am delusional or just plain crazy, but I feel determined, maybe more so now, to rectify this loss and move on in my career," Harrison reflected in a statement released after the fight. "God is great, I feel focused and positive and I know my career is not over. Despite Michael Sprott saying no rematch, we all know how the business works, and if it makes commercial sense, I'm sure we will fight again. In the meantime, I will rest, recharge my batteries, and chill out. When I go back to the gym, I will iron out my mistakes and bounce back."

Promoter: **Sports Network**

(2-17-07)

Brian Doogan

Michael Katsidis KO 5 Graham Earl

London, England: An awesome display of raw courage by Earl, 134½, Luton, England, who climbed off the canvas three times and endured a torrent of punishment throughout, failed to prevent Katsidis, 134, Toowoomba, Australia, from looking the part of a leading contender in the lightweight ranks in an unforgettable little war at Wembley Arena. The bout was for the spurious interim WBO 135-pound title, but

PHOT BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Katsidis scores one of his three knockdowns against Earl

they seemed to fight for one another's heart, such was the ferocity of this five-round slugfest.

Promoter Frank Warren had hoped that a victory for Earl could pave the way for a bout later in the year with 2004 Olympic silver medalist Amir Khan, who looked impressive in knocking out Mohammed Medadji with a sizzling right hand in 55 seconds of the first round on the undercard. Katsidis, 22-0 (20), came to the ring with an unbeaten record and a formidable knockout percentage, but the rap was simple: Whom had he beaten? In no time at all, he allayed any doubts and served notice that he is a man to be treated with the utmost respect by his peers. Earl absorbed a staggering amount of punches from the heavy-handed Australian before his corner retired him ahead of the sixth round, and that he survived for as long as he did was testament to his bravery.

Katsidis, 26, went on the attack from the outset, and his heavy hands were quickly in evidence as he rocked back Earl's head with a brace of right uppercuts. Earl, 28, fought back until a right hand put him down, shaking him badly. He rose at British referee Mickey Vann's count of eight, but soon returned to the canvas from a combination of heavy blows before the bell came to his rescue.

The second round was truly incredible, though the fight appeared to be close to over when another right hand crashed against Earl's jaw and floored him for the third time. He got back to his feet again but was in a groggy condition, and as he lay against the ropes trying to dodge another Katsidis assault, his trainer, Johnny Eames, threw in the towel. As was his right, referee Vann chose to ignore the token of surrender, and within seconds he was thoroughly vindicated when Earl, 25-2 (12), decked Katsidis heavily with a counter right to the chin. Suddenly, the fight had been turned on its head by a single punch and the whole arena erupted. They traded savagely to the bell before resuming in the third, when Katsidis' superior firepower began to tell again. Earl tried to give as much as he was taking, but there was no way he could compete on these terms. He needed to box and move his head, but he was too embroiled in the relentless action. A low blow by the Australian was penalized by the referee, but there was no way this fight would go to the scorecards. It was a minor miracle that Earl had lasted this far.

The fourth round should have been Earl's last stand as he withstood a maelstrom of shots from Katsidis along the ropes that prompted Barry McGuigan, who was working as a ringside analyst for Britain's ITV, to shield his eyes. Impossibly, Earl not only survived the onslaught of powerful punches to his head, he actually fought back again. He was cut around his left eye, but, more ominously, his legs staggered all over the place at the bell and the only element that diminished his bravery was the futility of it all. He withstood another barrage of punches in the fifth round and retaliated only sporadically, and at the end of the round, his corner made the wise decision to end his ordeal. Katsidis was simply too strong and the action was mostly one-sided—but no one who witnessed it will forget Earl's effort.

"I wasn't surprised that he didn't come out for the sixth round, for he was ready to go," said Katsidis. "He's gone to hospital and I just hope Graham is all right." The hospital visit was precautionary, but Earl will have to think long and hard about coming back from this.

Promoter: **Sports Network**
(2-17-07)
Brian Doogan

Robert Guerrero KO 9 Spend Abazi

Copenhagen, Denmark: The previous five months had proved quite a journey for Guerrero, 126, Gilroy, California, so traveling all the way to Scandinavia to face Abazi, 126, Copenhagen, Denmark, via Kosovo, Albania, was not so daunting. From the opening bell, he asserted himself in Abazi's adopted hometown, and when his opponent failed to come off his stool for the ninth round, he regained the IBF featherweight title at Falconer Centret, where the crowd had generated fervent support for the 28-year-old Abazi.

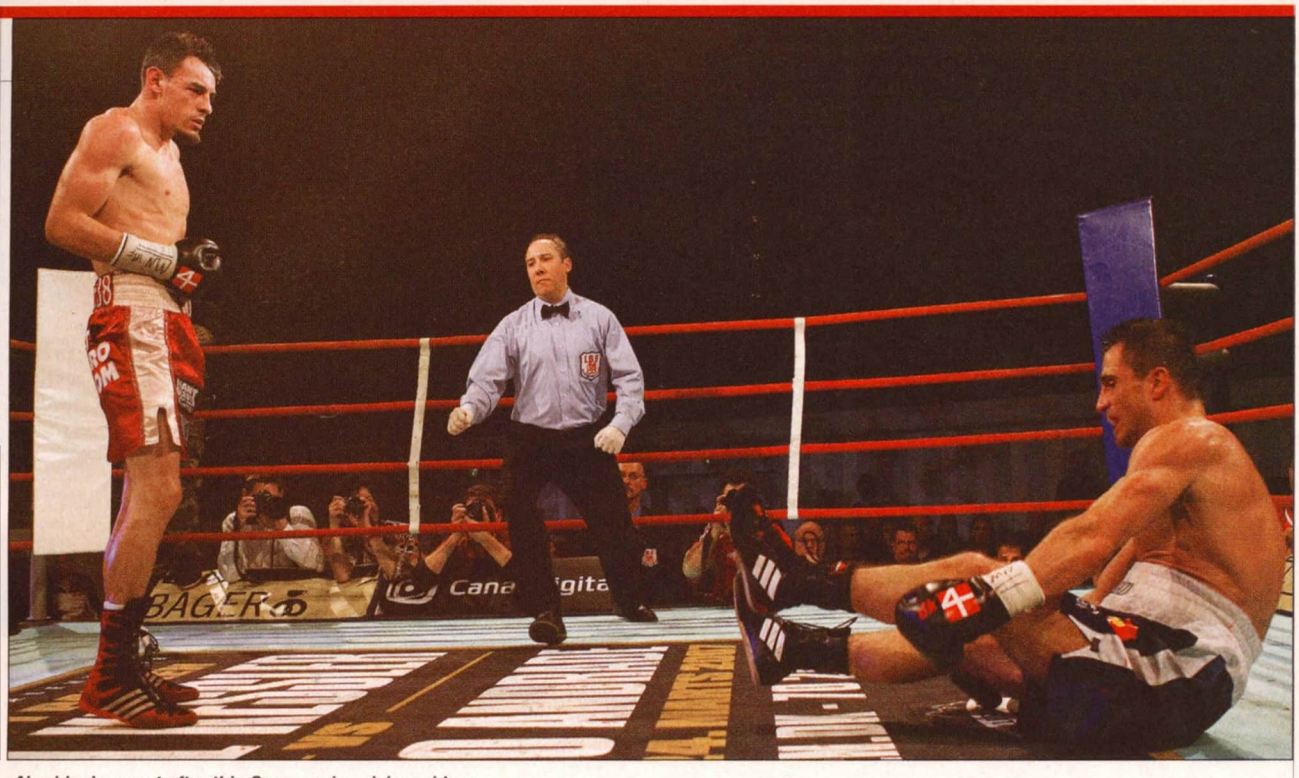


PHOTO BY LARS MOELLER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Abazi looks spent after this Guerrero knockdown blow

The 23-year-old Guerrero, nicknamed "The Ghost," won the IBF strap from Eric Aiken last September, but lost it on points in his first defense against Mexico's Orlando Salido in November. However, Salido tested positive for the performance enhancing substance nandrolone and was immediately stripped, presenting Guerrero with the opportunity to reclaim the vacant belt. Abazi had lost only once before but had never mixed in the upper echelons of the division, and, although he proved to be game, he was outclassed and outgunned and the result was inevitable long before the end came.

A penetrating southpaw jab paved the way to victory, and Guerrero produced a number of stinging straight lefts over the first two rounds, enough to serve warning of what was to come in the third. Moving in with conviction, he exploded another left off Abazi's jaw and Abazi went down, regaining his feet unsteadily at American referee Mark Nelson's count of eight. He survived the round and even came back strongly to win round four, displaying great courage to pressure Guerrero for three whole minutes. But the Californian took charge again at the start of the fifth, flooring his rival for the second time with a left and bringing blood from around Abazi's right eye. His dominance was clear at the end of the round.

Abazi was simply defenseless against Guerrero's jab and hard lefts, which he crossed and hooked to the head and body, systematically wearing down his beleaguered foe until the end came, mercifully, on the advice of the ringside doctor. The official time was 0:01 of the ninth.

"He competed hard, but I wasn't going to be denied; I wanted the belt back badly," said Guerrero, 20-2-1 (13).

"I did the best I could, but the blood was affecting my vision and I just couldn't keep fighting my way through it," said Abazi, 35-2 (10).

Promoter: **Bettina Palle**
(2-23-07)
Brian Doogan

Paulie Malignaggi W 10 Edner Cherry

***New York, New York*:** Lou DiBella was a little nervous hours before Malignaggi, 139½, Brooklyn, New York, was about to step into the ring against Cherry, 137¼, Wauchula, Florida. DiBella, who promotes Malignaggi, thought "The Magic Man" was taking a big chance in his first fight back from his gutsy 12-round loss to Miguel Cotto, in June 2006.

It turns out DiBella didn't have anything to worry about. Malignaggi, 26, pitched a near-shutout against Cherry, 24, who was fighting at junior welterweight for the first time, before a sellout crowd of 1,624 at the Hammerstein Ballroom.

Under the direction of new trainer Buddy McGirt, Malignaggi, 22-1 (5), displayed a nice jab the whole night, pecking away and outboxing Cherry, 21-5-2 (10). Cherry, who's from Nassau, Bahamas, originally could do little to combat the jab. Malignaggi landed 103 of 357 jabs (29 percent) and Cherry connected with just 56 of 249 (22 percent).

"I was a little a nervous coming in, because Cherry's a good fighter, but Paulie did a heck of a job, he put on a real boxing clinic tonight," DiBella said.

Malignaggi certainly felt good, especially since it was the first time working with McGirt.

"I wasn't gun-shy tonight, but I was consciously trying to box and not go toe-to-toe," Malignaggi said. "I wanted to not get into the kind of fight I did with Cotto because that is not my fight. This was my first fight with Buddy and we're working

on a lot of new things. He will make me a more complete fighter. Hopefully, we will look better and better."

Malignaggi ruled the first four rounds, using his speed and jab to perplex Cherry. Cherry finally was able to tag The Magic Man a few times in the fifth, catching him with a couple of decent right hands to win his first round.

But Malignaggi found a rhythm again, controlling most of the last five rounds behind his jab.

"That's got to be the main weapon," Malignaggi said. "I tried to keep him on the end of the stick, which is my comfort zone. Just had to keep jabbing."

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Malignaggi rides his jab to victory over Cherry

Judge Steve Epstein (USA) had it a 100-90 shutout for Malignaggi, while judges Billy Costello (USA) and Tom Kaczmarek (USA) each had it 98-92, as did THE RING. The referee was Pete Santiago (USA).

"I came off a really physical fight, and I wanted to make sure I could box like I always had," Malignaggi said. "I didn't want to stand in there and trade with him like I did with Cotto. I needed to let myself know I was back, so psychologically it was good for me."

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **DiBella Entertainment**
(2-17-07)
Joe Santoliquito

Nate Campbell W 12 Ricky Quiles

Tampa, Florida: What looked on paper like a pleasing lightweight scrap between two veteran contenders turned out to be anything but pleasing, as Campbell issued a beating that should have been stopped but never was. At the end of this 12-rounder at the A La Carte Pavilion, it was a minor miracle that Quiles didn't exit the A La Carte on a cart.

During the 12th round, ESPN2 color analyst Teddy Atlas was screaming to referee Jorge Alonso (USA) to stop the bout, but for some reason, neither Alonso nor Quiles' corner were willing to halt the sickeningly one-sided fight. Quiles won just one round on two of the scorecards and zero rounds on the third, and with eight knockouts in only 49 previous bouts, there was no realistic hope of him turning the fight around with one punch. In each of the last two rounds, Quiles was just a punching bag that refused to go down—and late in the 12th, he finally did go down from an overhand right to the skull and a right to the body, struggling up at the count of seven. And yet he was allowed to take shots until the final bell, creating a sad image that completely overshadowed the high-quality performance of Campbell.

The first 10 rounds were just a repetitive blur of demonstrated fighting superiority by "The Galaxxy Warrior." Campbell, 134¾, Jacksonville, Florida, got in close, applied pressure, and forced Quiles, 134, Davie, Florida, via Ponce, Puerto Rico, to take part in exchanges he had little hope of winning. In the second round, Campbell, 34, staggered Quiles, 36, with a right hand. Hard bodyshots followed over the next several rounds, and right hands splitting Quiles' guard left him with swelling and redness around the eyes by the midway point of the fight.

The steady beating continued until the 10th, when it switched from steady to overwhelming. Three rights to the head had Quiles reeling, and an assortment of vicious shots sank into his ribs throughout the round. Between rounds, a surrender from Quiles' corner would have been justified, but instead he was sent out for the 11th, which was even more punishing than the previous round. There was clearly no need for round 12, but again Quiles was sent out to be slaughtered by Campbell, and even though Campbell showed reluctance to hurt his opponent any more than was necessary, Quiles, 39-8-3 (8), was so defenseless that Campbell, 30-5-1 (24), couldn't help himself. It was truly a disturbing sight seeing both ref Alonso and Quiles' cornermen show no compassion whatsoever. Judge Ric Bays (USA) scored it 120-107, Richard Green (USA) had it 119-109, and Joseph Pasquale (USA) saw it 119-106, correctly handing out more than just one 10-8 round. It was an absolute shame, however, the cards even had to be read at all.

Promoter: **Starfight Promotions**
(3-2-07)

Johnny Tapia W 10
Evaristo Primero

Albuquerque, New Mexico: In what was billed as the final bout of a tremendous, 19-year pro career that spanned 63 fights and major titles in three different divisions, Tapia said goodbye—supposedly—with a final victory before a capacity crowd of 3,000 at the Isleta Casino in his hometown.

The non-televised 10-round bout originally was supposed to pit Tapia against Colombian Ilido Julio, but on the afternoon of the fight, the Isleta Athletic Commission announced that Julio had failed his medical exams.

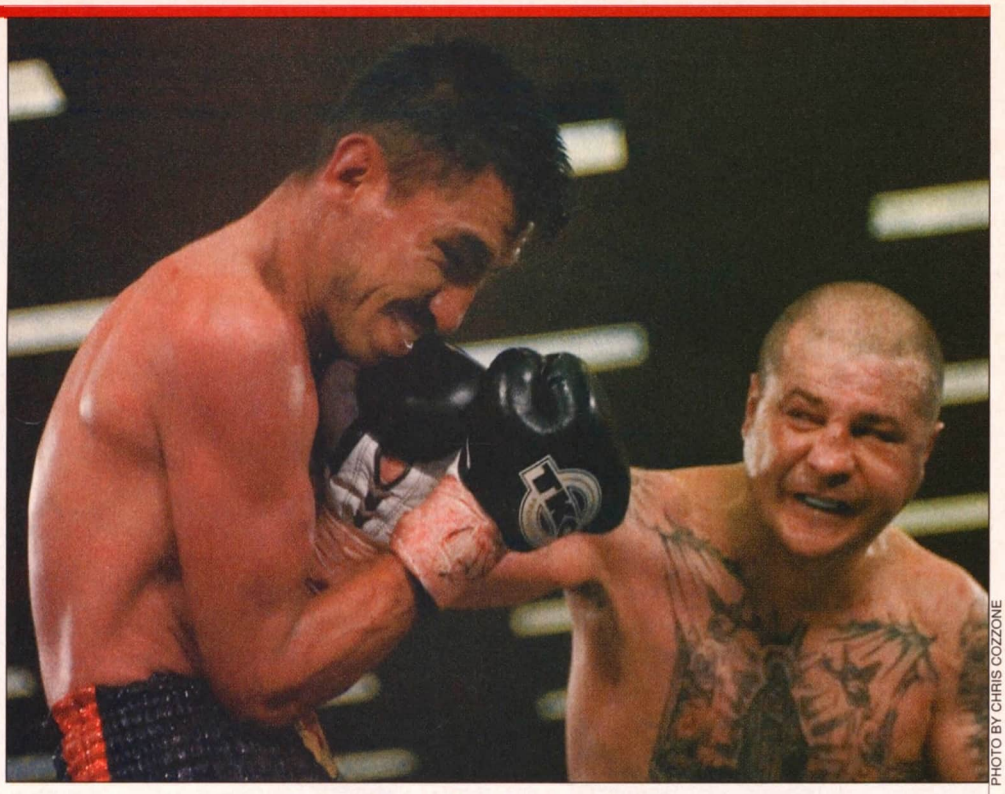


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE

Tapia plows a right into Primera during his farewell fight

The scramble for a last-minute opponent was on, settling on shopworn Mexican retiree Alberto Cepeda until, with two hours to spare, he was out of the picture due to problems crossing the border. Fortunately, two fighters, Cesar Lopez of El Paso and Evaristo Primero of Juarez, Mexico, were slated to fight a six-round exhibition bout, both having lost their opponents earlier in the week.

Team Tapia chose Primero, who'd weighed in at 116 pounds the day before to Tapia's 126.

But the 11th-hour opponent, despite his size and dubious credentials, was suitable for the 40-year-old Tapia, who proved to be in the 11th hour of his career. If there were any doubts before the fight about whether he should retire, there weren't any afterward.

Although the speed and reflexes that made Tapia such an exciting fighter in his prime were gone, straightforward aggression made it possible to edge the win over the scrappy Primero, 29, who overcame his shyness at the end of round two, and started to land a crisp, clean right hand to Tapia's face.

The big right of Primero's earned him the third and fourth, while Tapia sought to land left hooks to the body. Both fighters traded body blows in the fifth round, each landing unintentional low blows and, at least one apiece, intentional elbows.

Tapia bobbed and weaved out of range of Primero's right in the fifth, and the sixth was a toss-up, Tapia's jab and left hook up against Primero's all-too-clean right hands. An accidental headbutt marred both fighters halfway through the sixth, opening up a cut on the right side of Primero's head while making an audible crunch of Tapia's nose.

Round seven was all Primero, but for a final rally in the closing moments by Tapia, and, in the eighth, Tapia's reflexes failing, Primero had found a home for his right.

In the last two rounds, Tapia, sensing desperation in an all-too-close fight, pulled out the victory by taking the fight to Primero, who waited too long to counter back at the likely future Hall of Famer.

At the end of 10, judge Margaret Garcia (USA) scored an unbelievable 98-92 for Tapia, but her fellow judges hit the mark, Levi Martinez (USA) 96-94 for Tapia and Lorenzo Saiz 95-95. THE RING scored it for Tapia, 96-94.

"I thought I won, but I knew I was going to have to knock him out to win here," said Primero, 14-10-1 (7). "We were in his house."

After 31 years of boxing, Tapia closes his career with a record of 56-5-2 (28).

"I did what I had to do and I retired here in Albuquerque," he said. "This was the way I wanted to go out—with a good fight."

On March 12, Tapia wound up in Albuquerque's Presbyterian Hospital after an apparent cocaine overdose. A day later, he regained consciousness, and his condition was upgraded from critical to serious. Tapia was slammed with more bad news when he found out his brother-in-law, 39-year-old Robert Gutierrez, was killed along with his 23-year-old nephew, Ben Garcia, in a car accident traveling to see him in the hospital.

Promoter: **Fresquez Productions**
(2-23-07)
Chris Cozzone ■

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[New Faces]

(Continued from Page 28)

him to see his mother, Paula, pawning personal possessions to pay bills.

"I needed money to live; when you don't have anything, you get desperate," recalled Kirkland, who began boxing at six and had a 134-12 amateur record. "I saw my mother struggling and I had to do what I had to do. When you're down to that type of stress and you're angry, you do those things. I lived in trouble. I tried to stay away."

But he couldn't.

"I couldn't get any jobs that paid, and my boxing wasn't jumping off," Kirkland said. "I started robbing people and started doing stuff like gambling. I did whatever it took to get money. I wouldn't jack old ladies or stuff like that. The lifestyle wasn't for me. I used to question why I would do certain things. I couldn't help myself. I didn't have any money."

Then something happened that changed his life. His girlfriend, Vanessa Walls, gave birth to Kirkland's son, James Jr. Kirkland never knew his father. Never even saw a picture of him. Kirkland vowed that he would break that cycle.

But 18 days after James Jr. was born, Kirkland was taken to jail. He missed his son's first birthday. He missed seeing his son and Vanessa on a regular basis.

"I'm not a jail person," Kirkland said laughing. "I made people in there think that I was doing life, because I'd tell them 'I didn't care about anything.' I was challenged in there. There was one gang that tried me, a whole group of guys, and I told them I'd take them on one-by-one, right in front of my bunk. They backed down. I'm never going back. I just learned one thing in there: If you hang around drug dealers, killers, robbers, gamblers, that's what you're going to be. That's why I stay as far from the 2-4 as I can. Someone is going to need four tanks of gas to reach me now."

Kirkland has won seven straight, all within the distance, since he was released on September 18, 2005.

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIREIMAGES.COM

Kirkland squashes David Toribio's face with a right on the way to a fourth-round stoppage. The hard-punching junior middleweight southpaw has exhibited a ton of talent, but concerns still linger whether or not he can escape his troubled past.

"Everyone knew the Duvas dropped James because all of his troubles; they tried to keep him busy," Miller said. "James was young, but he's matured a lot since the birth of his son. The second conversation I had with James I told him I wouldn't hold his past against him. What Team Kirkland is going to be concerned with is what he does for now on. James had some doubts about himself. But trust began to build between us. It's about giving James a second start.

"James has experienced so much already in his life by his late-teens. He had to live on the street. Most of his money came from robbing and gambling. Here was a kid with all the talent in the world. He just needed direction."

Wolfe has been another very valuable presence in Kirkland's life. She led the same type of life as Kirkland, doing three years in jail for dealing drugs and aggravated assault. Wolfe and her two daughters once had to live in abandoned cars in an Austin park. She's known Kirkland since he was 12.

Wolfe and Billingsley are among the few Kirkland will listen to, and the few he trusts. Wolfe says that no one has seen close to 100 percent of Kirkland yet.

"Everyone thinks we're blood related, like we're brother and sister," Wolfe said. "If he gets himself together all of the way, he can be a world champion. He could throw more focus into his training. His past still follows him a little. He should be fighting once a month because he needs that. James has changed a lot, but he has to be busier. He's a throwback, like a Tyson, in more ways than one. The only one who can beat James is James. James Kirkland in the best shape of his life, he can beat anyone in the world. I really believe that."

Miller and Dunkin, with the backing of Shaw, Billingsley, and Wolfe, see a title shot for Kirkland within the next 18 months. Kirkland's own personal motivation is trying to provide for his son what he never had as a child.

"Right now, what I experienced in prison is the best thing to happen to me," Kirkland said. "I just try to stay out of the way of everyone; I'm not that crazy about people anyway. I like my fans and the way they support me though. And I have control of my temper. That only comes out in the ring, because I don't want go back [in prison] for a ticket, spittin' on the ground, or littering. This time next year, I'm taking belts." ■

DON'T MISS

RING UPDATE WITH WILLIAM DETTLOFF

EVERY MONDAY ... EXCLUSIVELY ON: thering-online.com

Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, *The Ring*'s senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The dangers of boxing: "Long after you and I and everyone we know are long gone, men will still be fighting one another with their fists, and sometimes bad things will happen as a result. You may feel guilty about that fact if you wish. I will not."

Nicolay Valuev: "He's hairier than Robin Williams and facially looks an awful lot like Lurch from *The Addams Family*. In today's heavyweight division, that can get you a good long way."

The lack of a dominant heavyweight: "When a heavyweight champ is dominant, the only fun comes in wondering when someone will cut him down to size and how. We rush a guy to the top of the mountain just for the pleasure of watching him get knocked off."

Dettloff on thering-online.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

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THE RING Flashback

Through the years with "The Bible of Boxing"

August 1986

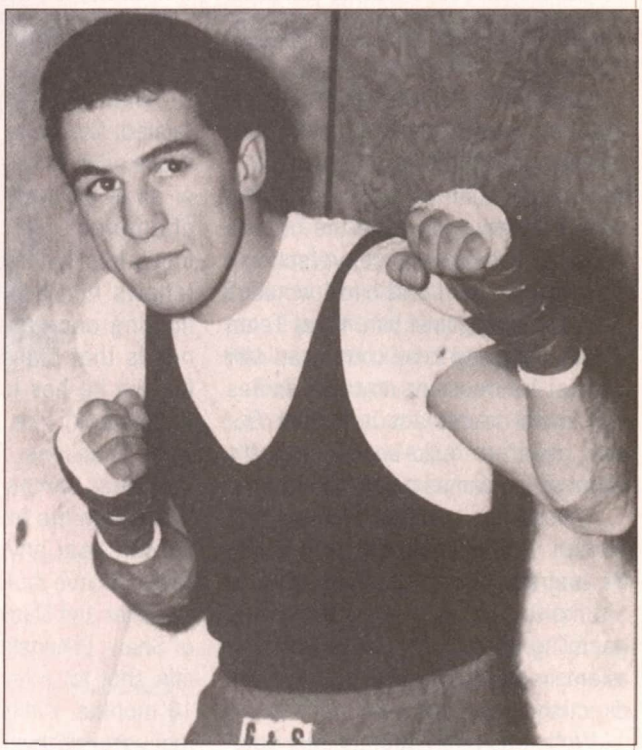
COVER STORY: "Is Sugar Ray Still Sweet?" by Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins delved into the controversy surrounding Ray Leonard's announcement that he was coming out of retirement to fight middleweight champion Marvelous Marvin Hagler. As hard as it might be to believe in hindsight, there were many in the media who condemned the match and warned of dire consequences for Leonard if he went through with what to them seemed a fool's errand. Collins, however, was not one of them.

"Perhaps the negative reaction from the press is not too surprising when one takes a closer look," wrote Collins. "Many sportswriters have problems coming to grips with boxing's violent nature. They like the idea of Sugar Ray making his millions and getting out. Now that he wants to return, it goes against the grain of their concept of Leonard as the corporate boxer who beat the system. What they fail to understand is that, despite his image, Leonard is first and foremost a fighter. As he has said many times, 'It's what I do best.'"

World Champions

(for the period ended June 8, 1986)

Heavyweight: Michael Spinks
Cruiserweight: Carlos DeLeon
Light Heavyweight: vacant
Middleweight: Marvelous Marvin Hagler
Junior Middleweight: Thomas Hearns
Welterweight: Donald Curry
Junior Welterweight: vacant
Lightweight: vacant
Junior Lightweight: Alfredo Layne
Featherweight: Barry McGuigan
Junior Featherweight: vacant
Bantamweight: Bernard Pinango
Flyweight: Sot Chitalada



Brazilian great Jofre entered the Hall of Fame

"The Ring Boxing Hall Of Fame Inductions 1986" Prior to the formation of the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York, THE RING had its own Hall of Fame, which was launched in 1954. Just as the IBHOF does today, inductees were divided into different categories: the Modern Group, Old-Timers, Pioneer Group, and Meritorious Service. The Modern Group was voted on by a panel of boxing journalists and historians, while the editors selected the winners in other categories.

In '86 a fighter needed to be named on 22 of the 33 ballots cast to get inducted, and only former bantamweight

champion Eder Jofre, with 24, received enough votes. Former flyweight king Benny Lynch, bantamweight contender Charles "Bud" Taylor, and legendary heavyweight Sam McVey were enshrined among the Old-Timers, while bare-knuckler Nat Langham joined the Pioneers. John Graham Chambers, the man who wrote the Marquess of Queensbury rules, was honored for his Meritorious Service to the sport.

"Fighting Prejudices" by Joseph D'O'Brian was a theme piece examining boxing stereotypes.

"A good example of the difference between an English and Welsh fighter was seen back in 1955, when Rocky Marciano retained the heavyweight title against the Englishman, Don Cockell. The English press wrote at the time, and many English critics still maintain, that Cockell only lost because of Marciano's repeated fouling. But Tommy Farr, the old Welsh heavyweight turned sportswriter, wrote in his column that Cockell had no sympathy coming. 'When you go in that ring, you're a hunter,' he said. 'Cockell had a stone (14 pounds) on Marciano; he should have set about him.'"

"Lloyd Honeyghan: The Nuclear Welterweight" by Jonathan Shapiro profiled the English 147-pounder who owned the British and European titles and was gunning for world champion Donald Curry.

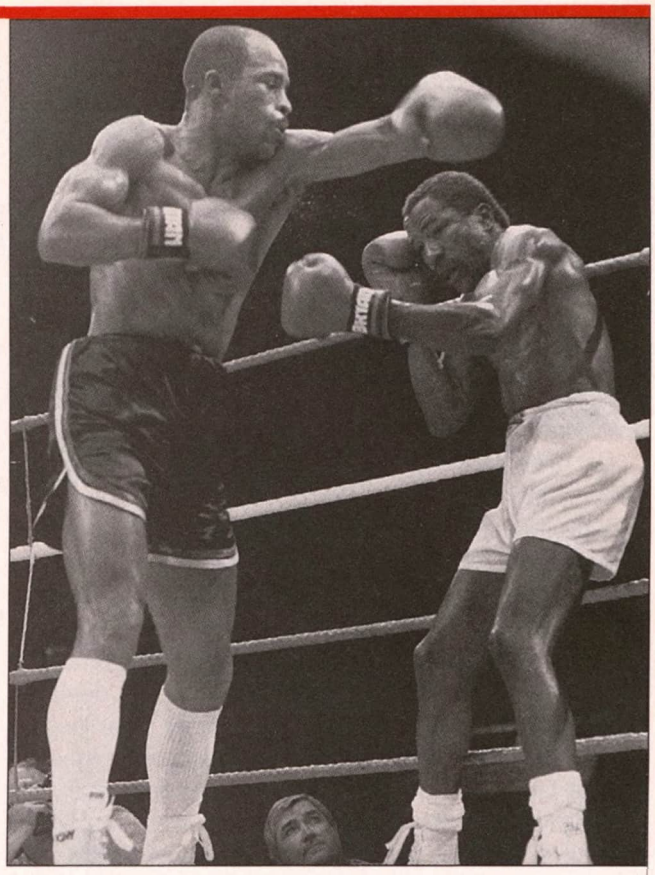
"Few men would look forward to facing the Lone Star Cobra, who remains, many think, the best boxer in the world today," wrote Shapiro. "But Honeyghan is unperturbed. 'Everybody seems scared of Curry, but I'm not. If he fights me like he fought Colin Jones, I'll beat him. And if I tag him the way I tagged [Horace] Shufford, he'll go down. Nobody is unbeatable.'"

Honeyghan was, of course, correct. He stopped Curry in September '86 to win the undisputed welterweight title.

"Anatomy Of A Promotion" by Collins explored the trials and tribulations of putting on a club show at Philadelphia's legendary Blue Horizon without the benefit on TV money. Promoter J Russell Peltz sold 1,148 of the 1,200 tickets he printed, but still lost $1,522.21.

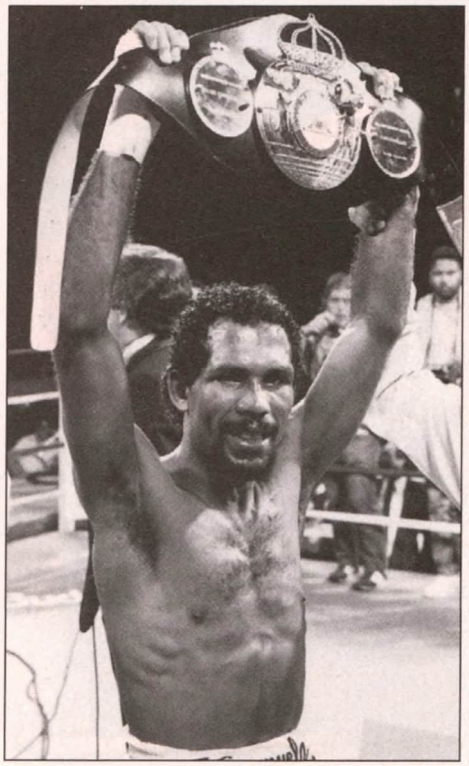
"Someone once said that the difference between failure and success is doing a thing nearly right and doing a thing exactly right," wrote Collins. "When promoting on a club level, the margin for error is even slimmer."

"In This Corner" by Jack Welsh featured referee Carlos Padilla, who was headed back to his native Philippines to appear in a movie. Although best known in the United States for his work as the third man in the "Thrilla In Manila" and subsequent championship bouts in his adopted hometown of Las Vegas, Padilla had already appeared in 21 Filipino films.



Honeyghan bombs out Shufford and calls out Curry

"My father played in silent movies as a leading man and later worked as a writer, director, and producer," Padilla told Welsh. "He was like John Barrymore in our country."



Pinango shows off his newly won WBA bantam belt

"Fighter Of The Month" was Venezuela's Bernard Pinango, who upset Gaby Canizales to win the WBA bantamweight belt via one-sided decision.

"Rings Around The World" featured, among many others cards, a report of Vinnie Pazienza's 10-round decision over former IBF lightweight titleholder Harry Arroyo that attracted 10,217 fans to the Providence (Rhode Island) Civic Center.

"There may still be some doubts about his boxing ability, but there are no doubts about Pazienza's talent for drawing a crowd," wrote New England correspondent Jay N. Miller. ■

[The Fight Doctor]

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

You've Got Questions ... The Doctor Has Answers

Tommy Morrison is fighting again after he was told he was HIV positive in 1996. Were the tests wrong? Have opinions changed as to whether or not an HIV positive fighter should fight?

In 1996, the Nevada State Athletic Commission denied Tommy Morrison a license to box after he was confirmed HIV positive at Quest Laboratories, then going by the name Associated Pathologists Laboratories. According to ESPN.com, Morrison now states he was misdiagnosed with a false-positive test.

Morrison was never suspended by Nevada for a positive HIV. He was denied a license. If a fighter is denied a license by one jurisdiction, he can apply to other jurisdictions. This is in contrast to a medical suspension, where it is against federal law to allow a fighter to fight in another jurisdiction until the suspension is removed. If a fighter questions a denial or suspension, he is able to request a commission hearing and present contradictory evidence that he is fit to box. Since Morrison's license denial 11 years ago, Nevada has never received data to demonstrate that his original tests were incorrect.

New York's HIV policy was adopted in 1996 and has not changed. A fighter with a positive HIV Antibody confirmed (by Western Blot) cannot obtain a license to compete. Dr. William Lathan, New York State Athletic Commission Medical Advisory Board member who established the original HIV and hepatitis testing protocol notes, "A confirmed HIV positive fighter should never be allowed to compete."

Although there is more than one test for HIV, through the years the testing has not changed a great deal. If someone is positive for the HIV antibody, they will always test positive. There are, however, other tests that will quantify the amount of HIV viral particles present. Some experts believe that if the number is sufficiently low, the test will register as negative, and the fighter is no longer infectious.

Many others disagree.

Dr. Emory Chang, head of the UCLA HIV clinic states, "On your intact skin there would be low transmission of HIV. However, if there is an open wound, or if the virus comes in contact with a fighter's mucous membranes of the nose or mouth, where there is no protective keratin layer, infectivity is higher."

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Morrison back in action for the first time since 1996

In a fight, both fighters often bleed. Referees and ringside spectators are frequently covered in microscopic particles of blood. This has to be a concern. No one would disagree that a fighter's rights have to be protected, and when a diagnosis can be a death sentence, there is no room for error.

Do referees and physicians ever disagree on whether or not to stop a fight?

The referee is typically considered the sole arbiter in a fight. Many jurisdictions allow the referee or the doctor to stop a fight. In Nevada, the doctor will recommend that a fight be stopped or allowed to con-

tinue, but it is the ultimate decision of the referee. If there is a discrepancy between the referee and physician, it is typically out of inexperience of one of the parties. Experienced referees like Nevada's Jay Nady can compensate for a less-experienced ring doctor by guiding him to the right decision.

"Several years ago I was working a fight in Manila, and a clash of heads produced a tiny cut," said Nady. "I was not even going to ask the doctor to evaluate it, but between rounds, while I was collecting the scorecards, the doctor came in and waived off the fight. So, I took the doctor aside and told him to get out of my ring and not come back."

Nady recognizes there can be tremendous liability in overruling the doctor, but said, "In foreign countries, it is often difficult to know who to trust."

"Although it is unusual, it does happen," said Nevada ring physician Steve Brown when asked about disagreements between referees and ringside doctors. "I think it not only disrespectful of the referee to disregard the physician's recommendation, but dangerous and potentially a huge liability. In general, when the physician recommends a fight should not continue, the referee respects that opinion and stops the fight. Usually, the physician and the referee maintain a spoken, and in some cases an unspoken, dialogue throughout the contest. In this way the stoppage is mutually agreed upon."

Ring doctors can disagree among themselves regarding when to stop a fight. The rule of thumb should be to go with the most medically aggressive decision.

Is blood loss from a nosebleed or cut ever an issue in stopping a fight?

Symptoms of too much blood loss include: a rapid pulse, cold clammy skin, pale skin, dizziness, and confusion. Hypovolemic shock is an emergency condition in which severe blood and fluid loss makes the heart unable to pump blood to the body. As a result, many organs will stop working.

A 154-pound male has approximately 10 pints of circulating blood. A presumably healthy individual can lose about 10 to 15 percent of his blood volume without it becoming a problem.

In a boxing match, most cuts are venous (bleeding veins), and while they may continue to ooze for a round or two, they are easy to stop with pressure and allowable coagulants such as epinephrine, Avetine, or Thrombin. "A pumper," or an arterial bleed, is difficult stop during a one-minute rest period. The blood loss from these cuts is faster, and often more difficult to treat.

Emergency physician and former Nevada Commissioner Dr. Flip Homansky notes, "The blood loss in a fight is acute. So it takes less bleeding to create a danger. The athlete is already dehydrated and higher oxygenation is needed. I would recommend a fight stop if there was more than one pint lost."

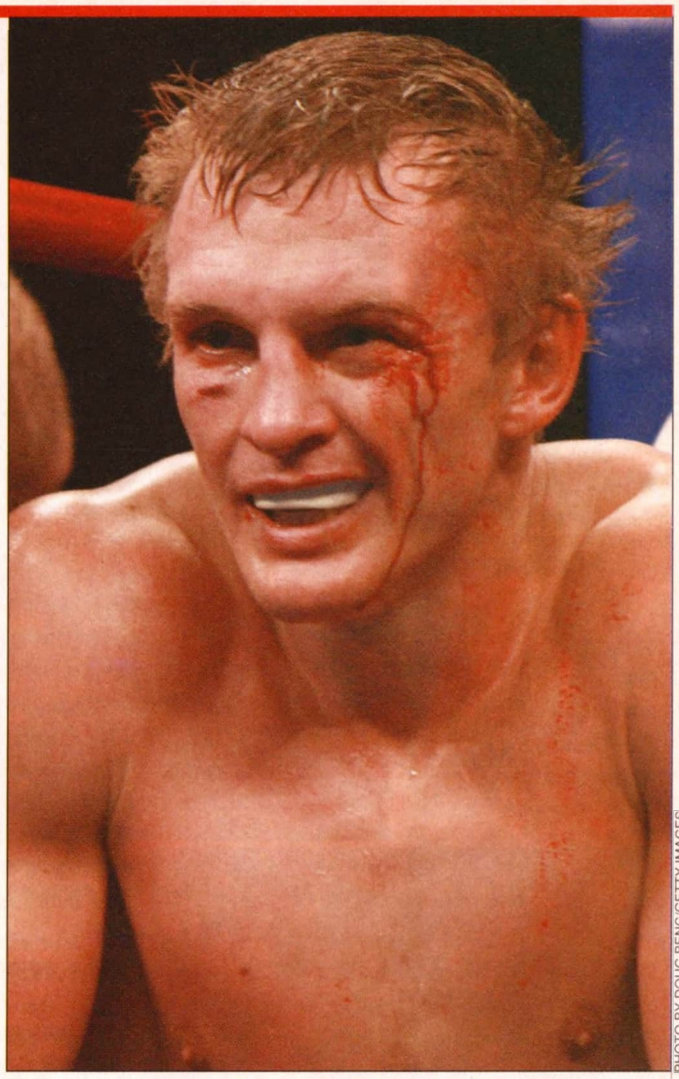


PHOTO BY DOUG BENC/GETTY IMAGES

Should a fight ever be stopped due to loss of blood?

Have the rules changed regarding the amount of tape and gauze that can be used on a fighter's hands?

Regulatory guidelines have not changed. Hand wraps are typically restricted to no more than 20 yards of soft gauze, no more than two-inches wide. Unfortunately, commissions rarely examine tape and gauze packages, so it is conceivable that more might be used. The gauze can be held in place by no more than eight-feet of adhesive tape, no more than 11½" wide. Adhesive tape cannot cover the knuckles when the hand is clenched to make a fist. Water, or any other liquid or material on the tape, is strictly prohibited.

Hand wrap placement is frequently argued. New York hand surgeon Dr. Charles P. Melone Jr., who began treating boxers more than 25 years ago, is convinced that there should be no limitation on the amount of allowable hand wraps. He believes excess wraps will not turn the hand into a weapon but will better protect the fighter's hand from injury. Dr. Melone notes that trainers often make the hand wraps too bulky and neglect to properly protect the knuckles, where most hand injuries occur. ■

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

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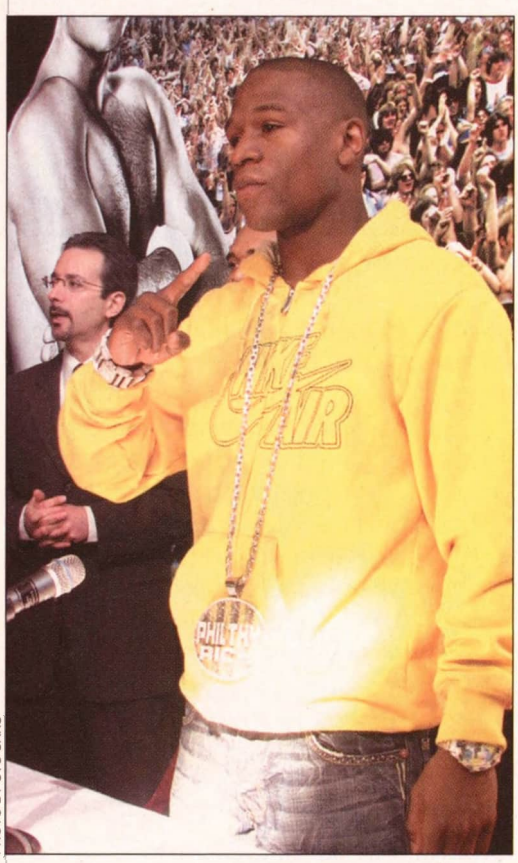


PHOTO BY STU SAKS

Floyd Mayweather believes that he is not only number-one pound-for-pound today, but also the best fighter of all-time. Dissenting reader Robert Perez feels that "Pretty Boy's" claim is the "dumbest thing" he's ever heard and lists Roberto Duran, Ray Robinson, Ray Leonard, and others as men who would have beaten him.

Not So Fast, Floyd

Floyd Mayweather has been saying he is the best fighter ever, but he's obviously forgetting the fighters of the 1980s and before. If you think about it, Mayweather is not even the best in most of the divisions in which he's fought. Maybe he was the best junior lightweight ever, but at lightweight, Roberto Duran would have destroyed him. At junior welterweight, Aaron Pryor would have easily have defeated him. At welterweight, Sugar Ray Leonard, Wilfred Benitez, and Tommy Hearns all would have defeated him. And Sugar Ray Robinson would have played with Floyd. So for Mayweather to say he's the best ever is the furthest thing from the truth and the dumbest thing I've ever heard.

ROBERT PEREZ
aaronpryor@webtv.net

It was ironic to hear Floyd Mayweather say that he "didn't need" Shane Mosley anymore because he only wants bigger names. I would rather dish out money to see Shane Mosley give his all and act like a true sportsman in the ring than see Mayweather run for the last four rounds and then cry after beating an opponent he calls a "clubfighter."

DAN MUELLER
Ferrismueller1@hotmail.com

Ladies Love The Contender

I just finished reading the letter from Isaias Cortez in the May 2007 issue titled "Nolo Contender." In his letter, Mr. Cortez claims *The Contender* is "changing boxing for the worst" and rips THE RING for "wasting that much ink, paper, and money covering *The Weeping Contender*." I beg to differ with him.

I have been a fan of boxing for many years thanks to my husband, but before *The Contender* I could not get any of my girlfriends to even give boxing a chance. But because of the show, I organized a gathering every week to view the show. We all fell in love with the boxers. The show put heart into the sport, not just two guys demonstrating rawness and brutality toward each other.

Please don't stop covering anything related to *The Contender*. I know it is the first thing I look for when I pick up your magazine.

ANNE MINSKE
Chanhassen, MN

Welsh Rabid!

Having just read the article "The Perils Of Fighting Overseas: Myth Or Reality?" in the April 2007 issue of THE RING, I am disgusted with the blinkered, biased view that Americans have. The worst place in the world to get a decision is America, and all non-Americans know this. Ask Felix Sturm! For you to insult practically the whole of Europe with your nationalistic propaganda is unacceptable and racist. Once again, the Americans think they're best, whilst the whole world hates the U.S.A. Wonder why!

CEI SMITH
Gwent, Wales

[Editor's note: While Mr. Smith is certainly entitled to his opinion of the article, his accusation of racism is totally unfounded.]

Tale Of Two Fights

Two recent fights serve as a microcosm of why the sport of boxing is so polarizing. Nate Campbell teed off on the brave but faded Ricky

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Samuel Peter shies away from a right hand from James Toney in their rematch. Although Peter won a unanimous decision, reader Mike Carr would have been more impressed if "The Nigerian Nightmare" had gone all-out for the kayo.

Quiles for 12 brutal rounds. Given the punishment that he had absorbed, I felt that the referee or Quiles' corner would have been justified in stopping the contest by the 10th round. ESPN2's Teddy Atlas even yelled for the referee to stop the fight, but the beating continued needlessly until the final bell.

That night, I questioned why I love our sport.

Fast-forward 24 hours to Edison Miranda's dominant performance against Allan Green. Miranda's storybook rise from nightmarish beginnings as an abandoned child on the streets of Colombia to one of the world's top middleweights is inspirational. Without boxing, Miranda may not have had a chance to better his life. Thankfully, I was reminded of why I love our sport.

RANJIT CHADHA
Chicago, IL

Viva Vitali!

The return of former heavyweight champ Vitali Klitschko has brought back excitement and a buzz to the boxing world. Hopefully, his injuries are completely healed. I hope to see him continue his reign of the heavyweight division and make his fans from around the world very proud.

ROMAN BARAN
St. Catharines, Ontario

Pep Bridges Generation Gap

I recently read the Willie Pep article, "When It Came To Boxing, Willie Stood Alone," in the April 2007 issue. I'm only 15 years old and have been reading THE RING for about a year, but I didn't know much about Pep other than what my dad tells me, and he always talks about how great Pep was. I was really glad to see the article. It also brought a smile to my dad's face.

JOHN JAMES
Dover-Foxcroft, ME

Dream Deferred

The cover of the May 2007 issue asks "Is The Nigerian Nightmare The Heavyweight Of Our Dreams?" The answer is no. If Samuel Peter was the answer, he would have stepped on the gas and put a serious beating on James Toney in their rematch, instead of being perfectly content with a points victory. This supposed knockout puncher has scored one stoppage in his last five fights. Let's not get too excited.

MIKE CARR
Molt_442@yahoo.com

Needless Tragedy

What happened to Victor Burgos in his fight with Vic Darchinyan was needless, even by boxing standards. Anyone with two eyes and half a brain could clearly see that not only was the fight not competitive, but that Burgos was in survival mode taking a brutal beating. Someone who cared about the young man should have stopped it, and the people in Burgos' corner should be ashamed of themselves. Also, how could referee John Schole, after seeing Burgos completely out of it, crossing his feet over one another and stagger sideways after being knocked down, not stop the fight? It was clear to me and others watching on TV that the fight should have been stopped well before the 12th round. If it was obvious to people sitting at home, how could it not have been obvious to the so-called trained professionals at ringside?

Boxing fans set a high standard for these brave warriors, so I hope that after what happened to Burgos, Israel Vazquez' fans forgive him for choosing not to continue in his fight with Rafael Marquez because of his inability to breathe through a mangled nose.

JIM WAYLAND
Jim_Wayland@hotmail.com ■

By Joe Santoliquito

Vitali Cuts In Front Of Peter

This is the best **Vitali Klitschko** has felt in a long time. In fact, "Dr. Iron Fist" feels so good it appears as if he's going to take a headfirst plunge back into boxing. We're not talking about a harmless tune-up for the returning former world heavyweight champion. We're talking about stepping right into a title fight with WBC heavyweight beltholder **Oleg Maskaev**, 35-5 (26). The tentative date for Klitschko-Maskaev is June 2, at the Luzhniki Sports Palace, in Moscow, Russia.

In order to justify its action, the WBC is exorcising a seldom used bylaw called "championship emeritus status," which enables Klitschko, a former champion, to leapfrog over the WBC's current ratings to challenge Maskaev. This unorthodox move has angered many in boxing, particularly heavyweight contender **Samuel Peter**, 28-1 (22), who won two so-called WBC "eliminators" and paid six-figures in sanctioning fees in order to get the next shot at Maskaev.

Step-aside money of $2.75-million and the first crack at the Klitschko-Maskaev winner was being offered Peter, the WBC's number-one contender, in order for Klitschko-Maskaev to take place as scheduled.

"I would say it's better than a 50-50 chance that we make a deal and get the winner," said Dino Duva, Peter's promoter, in mid-March. "But whether we get the deal or not, this whole situation of looking right past Sam Peter has been nothing but a disgrace, a total disgrace. Even with a step-aside deal, we're still very, very angry.

"Klitschko and Maskaev are trying to make the most money, and Klitschko is trying to get the easiest title fight. I understand that. But in situations like this, you fight for what's right. These screw jobs happen and you make the best of a situation. It's one of the ugly things about this business that you have to put up with. The only thing I can say is that God help the next guy who gets into the ring with Sam Peter; he's so frustrated by this whole thing."

Klitschko, 35-2 (34), hasn't fought since December 11, 2004, when he stopped Danny Williams. He was training for a defense against **Hasim Rahman** in April 2005, when he injured his right knee and announced his retirement. Then, on November 12, 2005, Klitschko underwent major surgery to address a torn meniscus, a bone bruise, plus an undiagnosed MCL tear. He then embarked on a lengthy rehabilitation program.

"I feel good now," Klitschko said. "I want to fight for the world championship, and right now that's Oleg Maskaev. I tore the ligament in my knee and I know this finished many sportsmen's career. It's taken me a long eight months to fully recover, and right now everything is fine. There is no fluid inside; I've passed all medical tests. I passed all sports tests. I spoke with my team, and my brother, and we decided to come back."

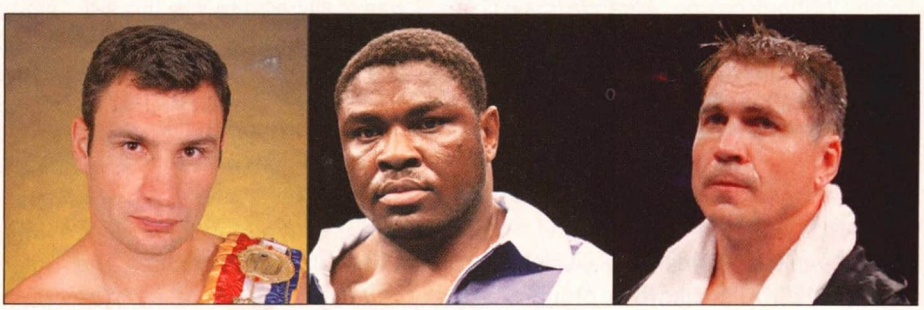
When **Wladimir**, Vitali's younger brother, won the IBF strap, it stirred Vitali's interest in making a comeback. The Klitschkos have always envisioned total world domination of the heavyweight division. Vitali beating Maskaev would place the Klitschko brothers that much closer to their ultimate goal.

"My main motivation behind this is to get our long dream of being world champions in the same division, at the same time," Vitali said. "I decided to make my comeback and use my emeritus status. It really doesn't matter who [the WBC titlist is], it could be Maskaev or it could be Peter. I want my world title back. I never lost it in the ring."

If a lawsuit doesn't prevent Klitschko-Maskaev from taking place, Seminole Warriors Boxing announced that it would make the postponed **Shannon Briggs-Sultan Ibragimov** the co-feature.

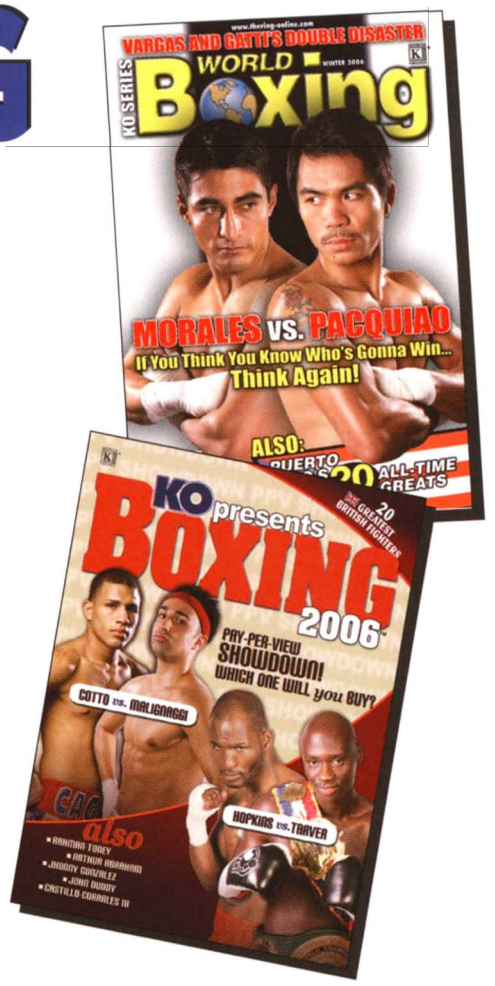
In the meantime, Peter will wait in the wings impatiently for a shot at an alphabet title.

"I don't want to screw one of my fighters with the sanctioning bodies, that's why we continue to deal with them," Duva said. "But eventually, Sam will become so in demand that we won't need to fight for titles, we just take the biggest money fight out there." ■



Peter (center) is being squeezed out by Klitschko (left) and Maskaev (right)

A DEVASTATING TWO-PUNCH COMBO!



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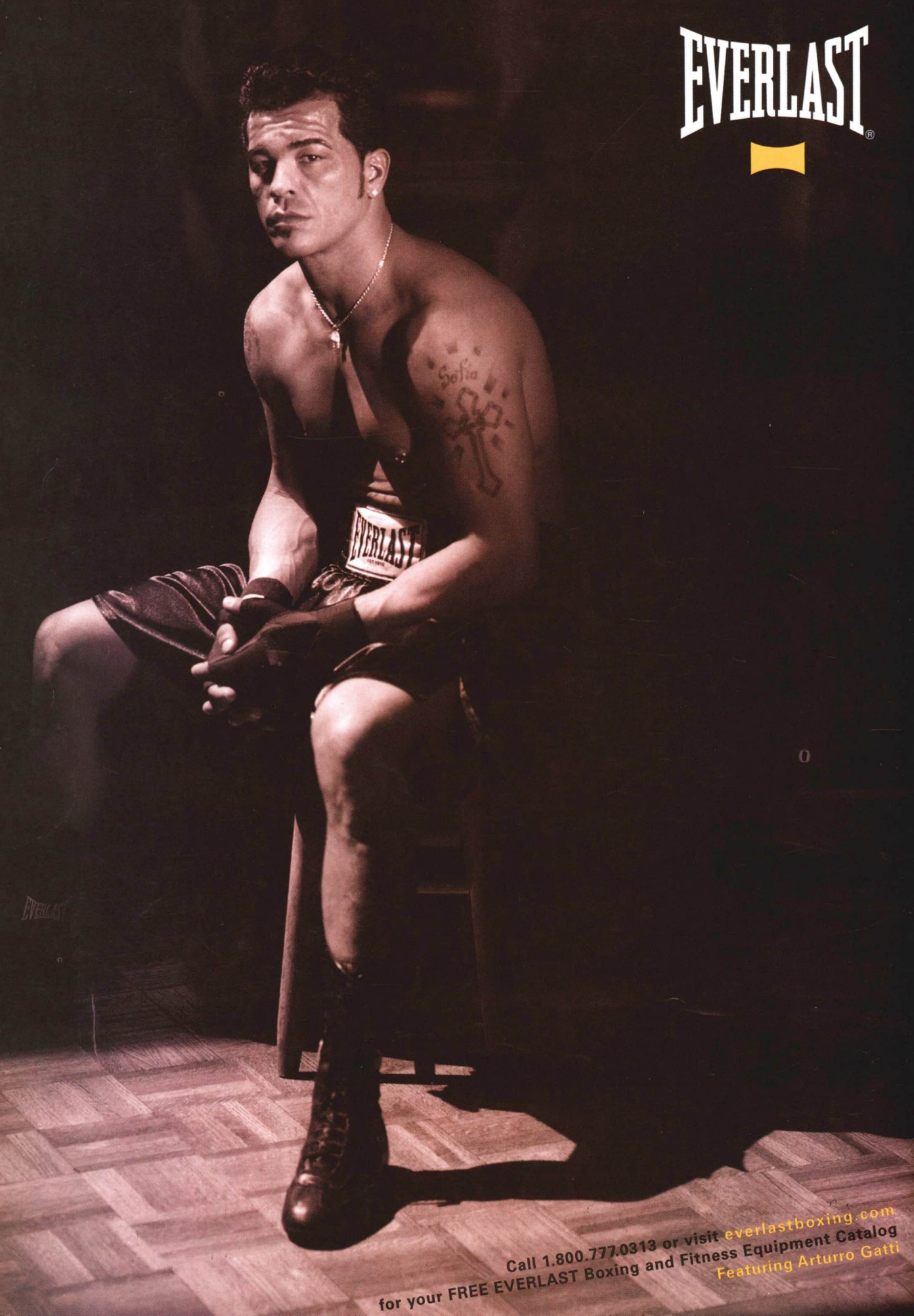
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